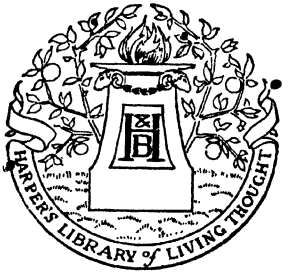
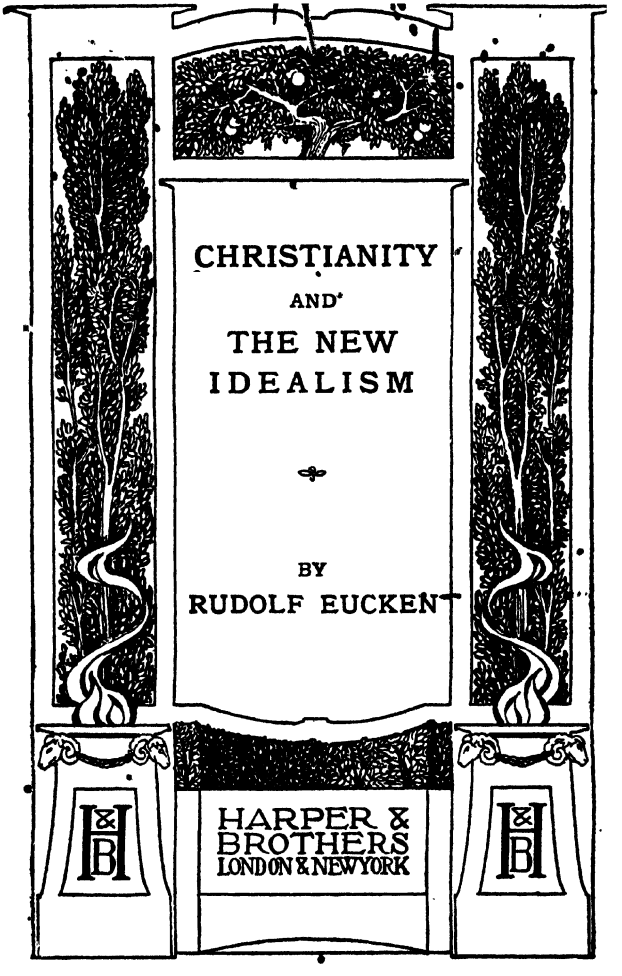


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CHRISTIANITY AND THE NEW IDEALISM

BY

RUDOLF EUCKEN

HARPER & BROTHERS
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CHRISTIANITY

AND THE

NEW IDEALISM

A STUDY IN THE RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF TO-DAY

BY

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST AND SECOND EDITIONS

THIS book is the outcome of lectures given at Jena on October 23 and 24, 1906, in connection with the Theological Vacation Course. These lectures grappled with certain problems which deal with the sharp oppositions that perplex our life to-day, and therefore seem to call very specially for elucidation. In the course of our inquiry we have sought to show as clearly as possible what these oppositions are, and have done our best to surmount them.

The first lecture deals with the grounding of religion in the inner life. Our aim in this lecture is to find some mean between the older thought which favoured the cosmological approach to religion, and the newer which takes the human soul as its starting-point, but is so liable to the defects of vagueness and formlessness. Over against both these methods we proceed to elaborate a system which, while based on the inner life, still preserves a cosmic character. In this way a clear distinction is drawn between

a religion of the spiritual life and a religion that is merely humanistic.

The subject of the second section is "Religion and History." There is hardly anything so significant for the position of religion to-day as the tendency to refer continually to history. Whatever the advantages of such reference, we must not ignore its dangers. It was incumbent on us to weigh them well, and in particular to ascertain whether it were possible to overcome the evils of a stifling and enervating historicity, whilst still maintaining the significance of history in opposition to a radicalism which is hostile to it. This we could not do without framing certain fundamental convictions as to the meaning of history which shed a new light on the picture of life as a whole, and therefore concern each of us individually.

Lastly, the incessant disputes waged to-day over the nature and value of Christianity invite philosophers also to consider the question: What is Christianity? The main function of philosophy in the matter is to bring out the spiritual character of the Christian Faith, and discuss the type of life peculiar to it. We must reach a conception which is sufficiently broad to take in all that is vital to the temper of this Faith and allow it full freedom to develop; while yet sufficiently definite to afford clear guidance to

thought and life, and stand as a protest against the mischievous vagueness so prevalent in the treatment of these matters to-day. Our discussion takes us back to that which is most fundamental in life, and seeks at the same time, through a brief historical *aperçu* to sum up and appreciate the part which Christianity has played in the world's development. Throughout we expressly defend the right of the modern world to shape Christianity in its own way.

While our inquiry presupposes a systematic philosophical position, it is yet couched in as easy and intelligible terms as the case admitted, and addressed not merely to academic circles, but to all who, to-day, amid the prevalent spiritual confusion, are still concerned with the problem of religion and, in the treatment of this problem, desire freedom without shallowness and depth without immobility.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

THE change in the third edition, so far as the first three sections of the subject are concerned, amounts to no more than an occasional simplification of the style. But as I recast the matter in my mind, and re-read these sections with a freshened insight, I received the impression that whilst the individual sentences still faithfully recorded my true convictions, the effect of the work as a whole was to make my views tally more closely than they really do with the traditional, ecclesiastical form of Christianity. The need which we feel for new forms of religious and Christian life was not sufficiently emphasised. Sincerity, it seemed, required that I should bring out the real divergence more clearly, and it is in response to this requirement that I have added a new section to the present edition.

RUDOLF EUCKEN.

JENA, *May*, 1909.

TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

THE following translation of the work of Professor Eucken, entitled "Hauptprobleme der Religionsphilosophie der Gegenwart," follows closely the third German edition. The English title, "Christianity and the New Idealism"—originally suggested to us by the Rev. Dr. Maldwyn Hughes—has the express approval of the author on the ground that it accurately designates the central topic of the work, particularly when we take into account the new section added in the third edition.

We have the author's sanction also for two or three slight divergences from the German text.

(1) On page 1 the phrase immediately following the words "What is Christianity?" arises naturally out of the adding of the new section in the third edition.

(2) On page 2 the word "Unerkennbares" (lit. unknowable) is translated by the term "unfathomable"; the purport of the context being that beyond the finite or exhaustible stretches in all directions the infinite or inexhaustible.

(3) On page 18 the phrase "there is no necessary incentive to religious aspiration" is the translation of a slightly modified form of the German original which the author himself suggested as conveying his true meaning more explicitly than the corresponding terms of the original version.

The translators' best thanks are due to Professor Eucken for so cordially considering and answering a number of troublesome little questions, and also for his most valuable co-operation in the revision of the proofs.

L. J. G.
W. R. B. G.

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CHRISTIANITY AND THE NEW IDEALISM

I

RELIGION AS GROUNDED IN THE INNER LIFE

THE following lectures require an indulgent hearing. And this, largely because their subject-matter, by its very nature, demands a more thorough treatment and a more searching analysis than it is possible to give within the compass of a few lectures. But this very limitation may have its advantages. If we can only throw out a few suggestions and present certain points of view, this may serve to set the main issue in clearer relief. Our intention is to begin with the psychical basis of religion, then proceed to treat of the relation between religion and history, and lastly to discuss the question, What is Christianity, and how can it meet the difficulties it is encountering to-day? We shall thus proceed from the universal to the particular, from base to summit, and we hope in this way to carry one fundamental idea through all the diversity of our treatment.

To think that the discovery of a religious basis is a simple and easy matter betokens but a poor and weak conception of religion. That there

remains beyond our sphere some dim immensity of Being, some unfathomable depth beyond all that our plummet can reach, is indeed scarcely open to dispute. But to admit this is not yet to enter into relationship with this unfathomed deep, and the admission therefore fails to give us a religion.

But even if we were agreed in our conception of the Unknown, if we regarded it as a Power higher than ourselves, but including us within the sphere of its influence, we should yet be none the nearer to a religion. For it is essential to religion that the higher Power in our midst should be not merely an influence but a living Presence, and that our relationship to this Presence should not be just any sort of relation, but one in which our whole nature is involved. How we are to reach certainty in this matter is not so obvious. We must first find the point of view from which the problem can be attacked. And in order to do this satisfactorily we must characterise afresh the concepts of life and reality.

Now in the handling of this problem there is one point at least on which we are to-day united: it is not through scrutinising the world around us that we can hope to arrive at the goal we seek. No clear demonstration of the excellency of this world will allow us to infer a transcendent Reason as the cause of it. The bold efforts of the Enlightenment along these lines have had the ground cut from under them by Kant's "Critique." Moreover, the experiences of the nineteenth century have made us so keenly alive to the brute force of fact and the resistance which all spiritual ideals must encounter,

that we can put no trust in this intellectual road to religion. Even should it prove eminently successful, the most it could give would be a religious view of the universe, not a real religion affecting the whole man, strengthening and uplifting the soul.

There has thus been a reaction from intellectualism, so that we now seek the basis of religion deep in the soul itself, in the characteristic experiences and disclosures of man's inward life. An overpowering conviction persuades us that we need not wait for some other sphere than this in order to prove the reality of a higher Order, and put ourselves in relation to it. The one possible point of departure is the life-process itself, and only in so far as we bring its content and procedure into clearer light can we realise that a new Order already exists.

But incontestably sound as this general idea may be, there is still much room for misconception when applying it in detail. In particular, there is a danger lest that which professes to transcend intellectualism should become a merely reactionary movement. In other words, there are many people who fly from one extreme to the other, and take refuge from the objectivity of intellectual work in the subjectivity of mere feeling, in the self-absorption of a soul detached as far as possible from the experience of the world. In this self-centred life there are many needs to be met, many claims to be adjusted, and such as present themselves with greatest insistence and brook no denial seem entitled to look confidently for satisfaction. In particular it would seem that we were justified in trusting to the reality of that which

appears necessary to our moral self-preservation. But this brings us straight to religion, since only a Power that is not of this world can guard us from the perils of an alien and hostile Order.

In pursuing this train of thought it is by no means easy to distinguish concisely between right and wrong, necessary and problematic. So much, however, we may assert: that there is here grave danger of falling into mere subjectivism. To make an inference from man to something beyond man is allowable only when man is more than a mere point over against the infinite, when it is possible to distinguish in him a particular and a universal aspect, and to show that inwardly he participates in a cosmic life. If he is to have those universal experiences which religion demands, he must have inward kinship with a universe. The world without can only be matched and overcome by an organised world of spiritual origin. If, on the other hand, man is severed from all connexion with a universal life and is shut up to an isolated existence of his own, then, though he may build up a realm of wishes, hopes, and fancies, he can never make it real and authoritative for humanity. Yet that there is some superhuman Power at work within us, lifting us above the narrow limits of our private and particular existence, renewing us and also transforming our relations to our fellow men, is the supreme truth for which religion stands. It is through realising in ourselves the stirrings and impulses of the larger life that we win access to experiences of a universal nature. But if the Subject be taken in abstraction from the world, then Voltaire's dictum holds good, and the strength of

a need is no proof whatsoever that it shall be satisfied. To infer from a need to the satisfaction of it is possible only to him who is convinced that reality is rational. If this be not yet proved, then to start from the premise of human need is simply to argue in a circle.

But even if we were to regard this inference as a practicable method of approach, the religion to which it would lead us must yet inevitably fail to satisfy the religious idea. For religion would become far too much a matter of mere feeling and mood; it would seem to avoid all entanglement with the great world-problems and would shrink from allying itself too closely with the interests of human culture. It would constitute a separate realm, which no amount of subjective emotion and excitement could succeed in preserving from spiritual barrenness. Man cannot be resolved into mere states of feeling: there is something objective in his constitution, and with this he must reckon. A spiritual being, a microcosm such as he is, is forced by a necessity of his innermost nature to concern himself with the universe. If the intellectualistic method threatened to degrade religion to a mere way of viewing the world, so the method which proceeds from mere mental states—be they volitions, affections, or aught else soever—tends to make of it a mere matter of fluctuating feeling; and though the latter way may show more warmth and emotion, yet it lacks breadth; it offers no vigorous opposition to mere subjectivism, it binds man down too strictly to a merely human standpoint.

There is clearly no gain in shifting from one

alternative to the other. Progress is possible only if we succeed in somehow transcending the opposition. And this we cannot do unless we are able to pass beyond the co-existence of the various psychical activities, the separation of the so-called psychical faculties, to a primal and independent unity of which all manifoldness is the development and expression. In this unity the truth of man's participation in a universal life is bound to reveal itself: his experience must have a cosmic significance. Then and then only is it possible to ground religion in the inner life. For in this cosmic import of our experience we have indeed a guarantee of the presence and working of a higher Order. Thus the real question is whether we are able, through the active concentration of our powers, to detect the working of this cosmic life within us. On the answer to this question depends the whole possibility of grounding religion within the soul.

Now to this question our answer is a confident affirmative, and we rest our affirmation on the fact of the spiritual life. We are not as sensible as we might be to the importance and value of this fact simply because that which is immediately and everywhere present is always liable to be taken for granted and treated as insignificant. Thus we fail to perceive and appreciate aright the marvel which is implied in the development of the Spiritual Life within us. In opposition to a mere series of detached experiences, the more primitive form of existence in which life is no more than a succession of momentary associations, there emerges within us an entirely new life, a life that is also a world, in which every single activity is sustained and ani-

mated by a common endeavour. Many indications go to show that spiritual life and production are no mere appendage to an already given reality, but that they are themselves the makers of a new reality. Their activity is not limited to one particular sphere, but seeks to embrace all that comes in its way. It is sensible of pain and contradiction when something remains outside its grasp, unassimilated and unintelligible. In thought, no less than in action, we find clear proof that the Spiritual Life does not merely collect and accumulate, but unifies and transforms; that it does not rest content with the given, but ever reaches beyond it, holding forth new ends for our endeavour. Thought refuses to be a mere link in the chain of causes and effects; it steps outside the series, confronts it, and seeks to unify it. Even when gauging the external world, the imaginative flight of thought, piercing infinity, reaches beyond all the bounds of sense-perception. And still more forcible and penetrating is its analysis of the inner life, its substitution of withness for nextness, its extension and deepening of the co-operative principle, its insistence, finally, on a single meaning that runs through all things. And similarly in regard to conduct. The Spiritual Life presents us here with certain ideals, holds before us a regenerated world in the light of which it passes judgment on things as they are; it seeks to set the new in the place of the old, and thus originates a movement of immeasurable significance.

Now the underlying motive of all these changes is the desire for a new world. And the distinguishing feature of the new Order is the endeavour to find an inner unity in all the manifold variety of

the world, to bring the individual under the sway of the Whole, to make the idea and the power of the Whole the effective stimulus at every single point. Thus the different spheres of labour need not wait for some coincidence of results to unite them: they are linked from the very start in spiritual fellowship. While each man sees the world in his own way, and has his own private opinions and preferences, the world of Truth is one and the same for us all, and an advance made at one particular point has an immediate value for all other points and for the Whole. Apart from such inward community, how could there be any organised realm of knowledge? And, similarly, each individual has a different idea, varying with his temperament and environment, of what is most useful for physical and social self-preservation. But wherever there is any unfolding of Spiritual Life, there there is always some Good sought, a Good which is universally valid, makes a universal claim, and is the standard by which all individual action is judged. The True and the Good soar above the petty cliques of private interests and opinions to form one common realm and bind humanity together in a spiritual community of endeavour. The True and the Good are not mere means and instruments of our welfare: to treat them thus is to destroy them at their root. They are rather the revealers of a new and a nobler life, of a new world, participation in which is the crucial mark of distinction between man and animal, or rather between the spiritual and the animal in our own nature—our unique position being, in fact, due to our participation as spiritual beings in this

higher life. In the case of the True and the Good, our effort is not concentrated on the external aspects of things, nor does it rest content with a merely external contact. It seeks to embrace the whole extent of its object, to inform it, and in so doing to realise itself. Thus our thought, by reaching beyond our mere subjective states, seeks to compass what is objectively real and adjust itself to its demands. Our feeling, again, through the exaltation of life above the natural level, can focus itself within the life of another, and, through righteousness and love, realise the being of another as a part of that larger and richer life in which we and it alike participate. Everywhere we see the same movement at work, the same tendency to break away from the merely isolated point and strive towards the infinite. Such a movement does not merely affect certain modifications within a scheme of Reality already elaborated; it evolves from out its own resources a new Reality, an independent realm of inward life.

Now we cannot survey this life in its general aspect nor do justice to its unique character without raising at once the question: whence comes it and what place does it occupy in the whole scheme of Reality? It cannot possibly be a mere product of human reflection. Its forms and powers are far too unique to be in any way derivable from us. Again, it conflicts so sorely with our natural interests, it demands from us so much toil and sacrifice, such a complete revolution of our being, such a shifting of our life-centre, that it is impossible to think that any natural impulse towards happiness would have led us to it. Our nature, moreover, in

its present condition, is utterly inadequate to the task of giving birth to the spiritual. It is indeed directly opposed to the demands of the Spiritual Life. Where on the one hand there is dispersion into merely isolated points, on the other there is the demand for an inner unity. In the former case there is but a feeble stirring of the spiritual impulse in opposition to the strong natural instinct of self-preservation; in the latter there is the claim to be the fount of inspiration and the very main-spring of life. On the one hand, life remains sternly subject to the laws of time and space; on the other, there is a yearning for a spiritual and eternal Order, and a reduction of all that happens in time and space to a mere phenomenal manifestation of a more essential truth. Thus to regard the Spiritual Life as merely man's work is to destroy it at the root. It cannot be understood save as a development of the organised universe, a development which takes place in man, communicates itself to man, but is never merely man's production. The Spiritual Life would be wholly incomprehensible, nor could it ever become a power in us, were it not independent of us in our merely human capacity, if the collective life which it reveals were not native to Reality itself and possessed of its own intrinsic principles of connexion. If Reality were not thus social in structure, how could it inspire our own movement towards solidarity?

Such a view involves a peculiar relationship of spirit to nature. In last resort, it must be the same life that is active in both domains, but in the domain of nature this life seems to be dissected

into separate threads, and limited to their mutual interplay. It attains no self-immediacy here, nor has it any substantial content. In the Spiritual Life, on the other hand, it concentrates into a Whole, and does attain to self-immediacy. Here for the first time Reality wins an inner unity and a soul. Here there is no dim, unfathomed depth beyond the life itself, but the life-process is now the author of being, and becomes the supporting principle of a world of reality.

That this independence of the Spiritual Life runs counter to received ideas we are well aware, but we must insist on it none the less firmly, for it is indeed the crucial point which determines the right or the wrong of all spiritual movements. For these movements, in all their ramifications, make assertions which reach beyond the sphere of our natural life. They introduce to us a new world, an organised spiritual realm which appears as something independent of human opinion and inclination, transcending the narrow limitations of our specifically human condition. It may be that we are loth to acknowledge this Spiritual Life through fear of lapsing into metaphysics, for it is precisely the modern man, with all his vaunted freedom, who is so often the punctilious slave of the superficiality of his age. But if we do refuse to acknowledge it, and yet seek for truth, seek to maintain any truth whatsoever, then we are denying the very principle of that which we proceed to assert, nor can we ever muster our forces bravely and press forward to victory. Here we have the shibboleth which divides mankind, for the ambiguous answer which is ordinarily

returned to these questions is being absolutely barred out by the most recent developments of thought. As for him who denies the Spiritual Life and its independence, he should at least know that he is reducing everything outside the limits of natural existence and social convention to a mere empty conceit, and that concepts such as truth and goodness have for him no shadow of validity.

But what of the man who takes up the affirmative position and recognises in the Spiritual Life an independent cosmic power? Has he thereby proved the truth of religion? Hardly. For the mere existence of a power superior to man is a very insufficient basis for religion. Religion requires that this power, in all its fulness, should be livingly manifest in us, opposing the life which would otherwise be ours; and so far we have done no more than reach a starting-point for our quest. We have but shown the possibility of this manifestation: it still remains to prove its reality, and this cannot be done otherwise than by showing that life is actually progressing beyond the position hitherto considered, that this transcendent spiritual power is revealing itself as a unique creative force within our human existence, thus lifting life on to a higher plane.

That such is the fact we again assert unhesitatingly, for we see that the Spiritual Life does not merely affect us indirectly through its results, that it does not come to us in fragments or claim mere fragments of our being, but that it transmits itself to us in its totality, becomes wholly ours, and at the same time springs forth in us as from

a fountain-head: our existence is completely transformed; we are lifted to the dignity of being starting-points for a universal life that is infinite in character; we become joint supporters of the Spiritual world, joint workers in the establishment of a realm of Reason. Different epochs have different ways of expressing this change. The ancients spoke of an independent reason in man; the early Christians of the priceless value of each individual soul. In our modern era it is by the value we attach to personality and spiritual individuality that we attest our belief in man's intrinsic independence, and show that we do not regard him as a mere link in the chain of causes and effects. It is, of course, of the utmost importance to free the concepts of personality and individuality from the vague ambiguities which cling to them to-day, causing us to regard as a natural endowment that which can be acquired only through experience of a world-context. The mere fact of our life's manifold activities being grouped round some centre does not in itself take us very far. It may, indeed, mean no more than a strengthening of our natural life, binding us to it more closely than before. It becomes important only when the concentration betrays the influence of an independent Spiritual Life which admits man to share in its infinity, and, in the process of revealing itself, enables him to attain a newer, richer, truer personality.

It is only on the basis of a personal life so understood that we can explain the formation within us of a spiritual individuality and appreciate its

significance. Never could the contingent succession of particulars which marks the state of nature claim to have a value, and to maintain itself against all opposition; never could such a mere congeries of events or experiences give birth to an inner unity. Only when life has been refashioned and has won its independence does it become possible to strive after such unity. Then, indeed, the building up of an individuality becomes infinitely important, as a wonderful and unique embodiment of the Spiritual World: the winning of an individuality is in itself an extension of the spiritual realm. But at the same time personality and individuality, from being so-called facts, become difficult problems, problems which embrace the whole of life and keep it incessantly active.

In the context here indicated the movement towards personality and individuality cannot possibly be interpreted as a withdrawal from the great world to a lonely cell, as a glorying in an isolated self-sufficiency. It must rather mean the winning of a life spiritual in origin, that would fain compass the whole infinitude of Being, draw the world to itself and fashion it afresh from its own centre. As a spiritual being, man stands from the outset in potential relation to a world, so that, in entering upon the world and developing its possibilities, he is in truth seeking to realise his own nature, and he resents as narrow and petty all that tends to imprison him within the privacy of a self-centred existence. Thus the movement towards personality and individuality is the starting-point for a new brother-

hood of humanity. The upbuilding, or it may be the maintaining, of an independent spirituality within the sphere of our human life must unite all the separate units within a single system. It is this, and this alone, that gives meaning and value to man's existence and the whole movement of the world's history. However much the rest of life, by virtue of its attractions and manifold opportunities, may pride itself on its superior importance, it yet is, and must remain, a merely secondary concern, supplying only the conditioning environment of the spiritual factor which is the essential nucleus. It sinks to mere semblance and shadow when it frees itself from this and assumes towards it an attitude of hostility.

Now this new life has the closest connexion with religion. For the primal force and independence which can face the world and boldly challenge its opposition cannot proceed from the mere individual, nor yet be a product of the given natural and social order. The wholeness of a man's life must proceed from the wholeness of some deeper Life, and must be constantly replenished at this source. Its presence attests the invasion of our life by a new Order of reality, involving a breach in the causal order of nature, tearing through the existing system of connexions, rendering for ever impossible a rational synthesis of reality within the limits of sense-experience, and precluding any monism of the world as we find it. But if reality is too rich to be imprisoned in our poor formulæ, if it harbours more oppositions than are convenient for us to deal with, are we therefore to make things easier by refusing to

acknowledge the richness and the oppositions? Are we to be so anthropomorphic as to declare that the true and only possible constitution of the universe is that which accords best with our human notions?

As we understand the Spiritual Life, it is not this or that feature of it which assures us of the presence of a transcendent Life and unites us to it, but rather the totality of an underived and independent life within our own. Thus understood, religion is inseparably bound up with our innermost nature. But this inner religious life reveals, as it grows, an opposition peculiar to itself. In its independence it is joyous and strong, and can manifest itself at any single point as an end in itself, conscious in virtue of its underived, independent character, of being superior to the whole existential Order, psychical as well as physical. But it does not draw this power from merely natural sources; it possesses it only as the revelation of a world-transcending totality of life. It subsists through the presence and power of this higher life; it is conditioned by it and dependent on it. Even its self-determining activity—nay, this above all else—appears as something bestowed on it, as a gift and grace. There was therefore excellent reason for insisting that even faith—the act of appropriating the new life, an act which might seem to be specifically man's contribution—was yet not really his own impulse, but was something given him, something that had to be awakened within him. Life does not present itself here as a mere combination of the human and the divine, as a resultant of factors

separate in themselves; rather is the highest human attainment itself a manifestation of the divine. "What have we that we had not received?"

Thus all original Spiritual Life springing up in man is connected in one way or another with religion. And the more conscious it becomes of its originality and of its opposition to the given existential Order, the more is our own temper and conviction sympathetically affected. But the more determinate form which the Spiritual Life assumes is conditioned by the fact that it presents itself to us in three stages: as sustaining, as militant, as triumphant. That an independent spirituality should reveal itself at all in our human sphere and should reveal itself not merely in us, but through us, in clear distinction from merely natural and social conditions, this in itself bespeaks a new and imposing development which could never have been wrought by mere individual effort, but can only be explained as deep calling unto deep. Thus creative geniuses of every kind have been wont to feel themselves sustained and impelled by an unseen Power, guided by an inner necessity which, through all the doubts and perplexities of the human instrument, has struck the right path and made the man independent of his whole surrounding world. This is why such natures have never been made self-conscious and arrogant by success. Rather has the consciousness that they were merely the vessels of a higher Power filled them with deep reverence and joyous gratitude. And this consciousness which we can trace so clearly in the work of our greatest is present

in all real work, everywhere separating the truly spiritual from the merely humanistic culture, its caricature. When work loses this sense of spiritual connexion, it loses at the same time its independent standing over against human likes and fancies; it loses all power to lift and transform man's inward life, and neither shrewdness nor dexterity can save it from sinking to a mere sham and parody of culture.

But this religious element that is present in all true culture is at first somewhat latent —a vague feeling that plays the part of accompaniment. It may even jeopardise the extent and reality of its power by putting itself forward too prominently and seeking to exert too open an influence. What first brings the germ to full development is the struggle which the new life is compelled to wage when once it enters man's domain. We should not find it so new and distinctive in type were it not for its sharp opposition to the ordinary life of convention. The new life subsists in us only through ceaseless conflict. So long as this conflict is mainly directed outwards, so long as it is concerned chiefly with the indifference of nature, the mystery of fate, the dull inertia of large masses of our population, there is no necessary incentive to religious aspiration: the focusing of thought on an indwelling reason suffices here to inspire man with conscious pride and the power of resistance. We see this in the Stoic movement, a movement which is constantly repeating itself in new guise. But it is quite another matter when man's inner life begins to be affected, when it is beset with

problems that far exceed his power to solve them, when the movement of the Spiritual Life either breaks on the sharp rocks of inner resistance or collapses through its own weakness—in a word, when the new life, man's own soul, has to struggle to maintain itself against that which is weak and base and evil in his nature. Such a crisis must end in one of two ways. Either the spiritual movement must suffer complete annihilation, or the connexion with and dependence on an unseen world must become a matter of firm conviction, giving life a characteristic tone and temper. Religion now emerges from her shadowy background into the clear light of day.

When we turn to history we find the same tale repeated. The perception and experience of the irrationality of existence have done far more than any demonstration of its reasonableness to win recognition for religion, though it is true that this perception has been accompanied by a firm belief in the imperishibility of man's spiritual essence, the impossibility of its total destruction. Pain and shock and threatened annihilation have brought life to a point of No-surrender. From the depths of doubt, where proof is no longer available, there has grown up the axiomatic certainty that we are rooted in another order of things. Such crises have made us feel that we are not here concerned with something that we can and may give up at our pleasure, like our own comfort and subjective happiness. We rather feel that something is asserting itself against us, constraining us against our will, and in the end making a convert of our will and becoming the

very soul of life. No one has ever felt these struggles more deeply and depicted them more powerfully than Augustine. It was just his conviction of the supremacy of a Divine Being that made him certain of the truth of his own being.

When the struggle is conducted in this spirit, not as a private, personal matter, but as a vindication of spiritual claims at this or that particular point, then it outgrows its merely resistant, defensive character. It becomes the medium whereby life is deepened, and there arises out of the distinctive experiences of its development, over against all the complications of the world of labour, a purely inward kingdom which becomes the heart and inspiration of all reality. This inwardness and its new content cannot, in the light of this context, be reproached with mere subjectivism; for the whole movement takes place not outside Reality, but within it, seeking to find in Reality its own true nature.

Thus a genuine Spiritual Life makes its appearance among us, revealing itself in three stages—as sustaining, as militant, as triumphant. The further the movement advances, the more pronounced does its religious character become, and the more clearly do we trace the cementing and uplifting of humanity under the influence of a higher Power. But however necessary it may be to distinguish between these stages and not to impute the result of the later to the earlier, yet, with all their diversity, they unite in the end in a single movement, and it is the fact of such convergency which first gives to our conviction its maximum certainty.

It still of course remains true that much in our human relationships is incomplete and even contradictory. As the spiritual movement develops, the opposition to an alien and hostile world inevitably defines itself more sharply, and even man's inward life is rent by revolt and opposition. For all our trouble and toil, the smooth and comfortable solution is farther off than ever. But this lack of finality, though a prolific source of doubt and anxiety, cannot in any way shake the fundamental fact. Indeed, the very tangle, the very opposition—bitter and uncompromising though it be—only serves to confirm this fact and bring it home to us more clearly. The task itself, with its compelling power and its fine superiority to all natural and social conventions, is a fundamental fact which we cannot gainsay, and, in last resort, cannot resist. Of our life, then, as a whole, Luther's description holds good: "There is no finished achievement; all is in the making. We do not see the end, but only the road. The full splendour is not yet, but the refining work goes on."

It is in this way that we seek to ground religion in the Spiritual Life. With the frequent attempts to give it a psychological basis our method has much in common. It is equally insistent on starting from man's inner life, and refusing to derive religion from an outside source, such as the constitution of the world around us. But within these broad lines of similarity there are vital differences, as our whole previous inquiry must have shown. The psychological method expects to reach its goal by starting from imme-

diate experience. The method which we represent—which, in opposition to the psychological, may be called the noëlogical—insists on an inversion of reality as it at first appears to us, and a complete recasting of life: this, however, requires us to consider the problem of the universe, it demands a metaphysic. It is from no love of theoretical subtleties that we take refuge in metaphysical theory, and hold fast by it in opposition to the main drift of modern thought. We are driven to it by the necessity of spiritual self-preservation. We do, however, plead for freedom to conceive metaphysics in our own way, and we decline all responsibility for older conceptions, whose deficiencies have furnished the opponents of metaphysics with an excuse for rejecting it root and branch.

Our refusal to give religion a psychological basis in no way implies any undervaluing of psychology in the scientific treatment of religion. For psychology is still left with an important work: it has to show the more precise form which the religious movement, whose essential concern is with the unification and regeneration of life, assumes in our human experience; it must show how this movement reveals itself in the individual and under human conditions generally; how it links itself to existing institutions and becomes, in fine, a power. The historical development of religion shows us in this connexion such curious developments of soul-life, such remarkable phases and characteristics, that psychology has much to do and to achieve, and, indeed, a special branch of psychology—the psychology of religion—is needed

in order to deal scientifically with the mass of material at our disposal. Only we must beware of confounding the form that religion takes among men—the existential form, in a word—with its originating ground or its spiritual substance. Otherwise we fall into the danger to which modern thought is so peculiarly liable, which indeed largely accounts for its lapse into naturalism or subjectivism : we mistake mere conditions for creative forces, and thus deprive Reality of its depth and life of its substance.

In religion, as in the Spiritual Life generally, we do not start with a ready-made fact and merely ask how it is to be interpreted, but the fact is itself the main problem, and all our concern with it leads up to this problem. Thus every original attempt to find a basis for religion presents religion in a new and original light : the conflict that is waged about the method is also waged about the content. We cannot therefore seek to ground religion in a Spiritual Life recognised as independent, without at the same time demanding a religion of the Spiritual Life, which, in many directions, may be clearly distinguished and defined.

In the first place, the point of crucial importance for such a religion is the life-process itself ; we are urged to view and value all outward manifoldness from the standpoint of inwardness and unity. This is perfectly consistent with the recognition that the Spiritual Life as present in humanity needs to be embodied in doctrines, institutions, and so forth ; but these ought not to be the main thing ; they ought to be incessantly referred back

to the life which is their source, to be tested by it and transformed in accordance with its requirements. Only so can religion escape becoming externalised and stereotyped. Again, a religion of the Spiritual Life must insist upon a spiritual content: vague ideas and sentiments are not enough. In particular, it must not degenerate into a blind devotion which worships it knows not what, and thus is liable to fall into the crassest superstition, and may actually end by invoking the help of the Deity in the committal of gross offences. Nor may religion be content with herself keeping passably free from superstition: she must fight it in every walk of life, and in this matter Christianity, in many of its forms, has failed to take a sufficiently decisive stand.

But, most of all, the religion of the Spiritual Life must distinguish itself from a merely humanistic religion. And here we are face to face with a peculiar dilemma that at first sight seems to imperil the whole existence of religion. If our human experience is to be the basis of religion and the starting-point of all its developments, then how can we eliminate the human element? How can we avoid imputing to the universe the forms and processes of our own life? To this extent religion is bound to be anthropomorphic. It merely becomes cold and dead if in our endeavour to avoid anthropomorphism we build up a structure out of abstract cosmological concepts, such as unity and being. But, on the other hand, religion may on no account be anthropomorphic, for how could it be a revealer of truth if it subjected reality to the conditions of a particular

kind of being? How could it rescue man from his limitations as a natural being if it remained wholly within his own sphere? The dilemma is insoluble unless we recognise a twofold aspect in man, a particular and a universal, a natural and a supra-natural; and this is a solution that we cannot arrive at unless we recognise the presence in man of an unoriginated Spiritual Life. What we have to do now is to strengthen the one element and subordinate the other, to comply with the demand which the whole history of religion makes upon us. For this history consists of a gradual detachment of religion from the purely natural propensities, and a strengthening of its spiritual import. But if its aim was thus conceived in all great revivals of religious activity, if they were dominated by the belief that their business was not to foster and further the interests of man as he is in the world as given, but rather to transform him wholly by opening up a new world, then all human conceptions and aims were bound to prove unsatisfactory, and, however immediate and certain the substance of the new life might be, yet all closer apprehension of it on man's part was only picture and parable. But incontestably true as is this general idea, it has not infrequently failed of fulfilment. The conception of religion has often been such that the human element has encroached on the divine and subordinated it to human aims. We shall have done something if, through a bolder synthesis of the Spiritual Life and a clearer delimitation of its boundaries, we can give this general truth a better handle, setting ourselves to revise the whole traditional

status of religion and to see how much in it is merely man's work, how far it evinces a readiness to indulge his natural wishes and inclinations, to what extent it is merely an ornamental addition to our lives rather than the establishing of a new kingdom. We must insist more strongly than ever that the salvation which religion promises to man is a salvation not of his natural, but of his spiritual self, that it imposes on him a momentous choice, and demands of him heavy sacrifices. He who minimises the opposition that is involved, and obscures the tremendous seriousness of the issue, may easily let his religion, despite all respect for outward form, degenerate into a refined Epicureanism. Thus a searching critical revision is demanded, and provided that the criticism be based not on external considerations, but on the nature and requirements of religion itself, it cannot be in any sense destructive.

Lastly, we must consider an objection which the very drift of our own inquiry appears to endorse. It was only up a thought-ladder that we mounted to a point where the presence of a whole new world was revealed to us. But does not this make the matter too complicated? Does not religion, as a result of this artificial setting, lose that spiritual immediacy apart from which it cannot accomplish its chosen task?

It might very well seem so to one who should regard immediacy as a simple conception, unaware of the problems it involves. As a matter of fact, it is a conception which the progressive movement of the world's history has entirely revolutionised. At the outset, only that which is palpable to the

senses seems to give us an immediate and unqualified assurance. The primitive mind can never be convinced that that which can be felt and handled is not the foundation of all certainty. But as spiritual progress is made, we begin to see that what seemed so immediate and palpable is really mediated and conditioned by various factors of a psychical nature, that it is only the final result of complicated preliminary processes, that many problems lurk concealed in our apparently simple and stable environment. If our sense-life, however, become in this way a problem —a mere appearance—the part played by psychical factors must meet with fuller recognition. As the movement progresses, the scattered psychical experiences of the earlier stages are brought to a unity, and win a position of control. It becomes ever more obvious that this unity constitutes the real tribunal before which all that claims to be true must justify its pretensions. Nor is the movement confined to the domain of knowledge; it extends over the whole life. Everywhere the progress of culture is urging men away from a sense-basis, and finding the significance of the sense-life no longer in its immediate appeal to the senses, but in its function as the instrument and expression of the soul's endeavour. The more independent life becomes, the more strong and self-sufficient it grows, the more does its main movement tend from within outwards, and not from without inwards; the more, to use a Kantian metaphor, does the Copernican standpoint replace the Ptolemaic. At the same time, the Unseen replaces the Seen as the true centre of immediacy. Our

own inward life now becomes the most intimate and certain of realities, more particularly when it unites its activities together into an organised movement, such as the recognition of the Spiritual Life would necessitate. This inversion of the centre of immediacy must be to the advantage of religion. When the immediacy of the Spiritual Life counts as the most intimate and certain of realities, there the immediacy and certainty of religion are put beyond all possibility of doubt. For, as we saw, religion is not a supplementary adjunct to the Spiritual Life, but is essential and native to it; nay, more, it is the fundamental condition under which alone the Spiritual Life can realise itself within human experience. As certain as is the existence of an independent Spiritual Life defining itself in opposition to our merely natural self, so certain is also the truth of religion. But such independence is essential to the existence of all that we seek and value, honour and esteem; without it there is neither science nor morality, and terms such as personality and individuality become mere empty words. Give up the whole, and we must give up the truth of the part. On the other hand, the more closely any part be linked to the whole of life, the more will it share in the immediate certainty of the whole.

And since we have found that religion is linked thus closely with the whole, we need not make any timid compromise with certain superficial contemporary movements, and content ourselves with a lower degree of certainty, saying, for instance, that we can never altogether eliminate the subjective element, and that religious truths can

never have the certainty of such formulae as $2 \times 2 = 4$. On the contrary, we maintain that it is a very poor conception of religion which deems any certainty superior to hers, and does not claim for her truth a far more primary certainty than that of the formula $2 \times 2 = 4$. Only a shallow and perverse conception of truth can allow the certainty of the part to exceed the certainty of the whole. For all single truths presuppose a whole of truth, a kingdom of truth: if they be not founded in this they are nothing more than mere conjunctions of ideas, which might be other than they are, and perhaps are other for other minds. The fount of certainty is in last resort the whole, and thence alone can such certainty be transmitted to the parts.

What gives to the opposite contention a certain plausibility—though nothing more than plausibility—is the fact that there are impersonal, as distinguished from personal truths. There are truths which do allow us to combine different factors and arrive at certain judgments without referring back to the life-process as a whole; there are others which presuppose such a Whole, and therewith demand a co-operation of the individual's inner life: these are personal truths, but they are by no means merely subjective. For the movement that transpires in the individual does not belong to the individual, but to the Spiritual Life itself; hence it is not adjacent to Reality, but within it. Truth as a whole is in this sense entirely personal in character, it involves the assertion of an independent kingdom over against all human likes and fancies. There is a wholeness of conviction in

it ; it cannot be imposed on anyone ; it can only spring from the individual's own experience and decision. Apart from this fundamental, personal truth, even that which is called impersonal loses its truth-character. Thus the fact that religious truth is personal, i.e. that it demands a mobilising of the energies of the individual life, in no wise detracts from the certainty of religion. Though religious conflicts among men may still continue—so great is the diversity of their views—yet he who recognises a Spiritual Life above all dissensions and differences of opinion will never be dismayed by the conflict. It will rather strengthen his conviction that genuine truth cannot be presented or imposed on us from without, but is in last resort an action of our innermost nature, an expression of Freedom.

II

RELIGION AND HISTORY

THERE is nothing so characteristic of the nineteenth century as the development of the historical temper and method. If the eighteenth century was the age of Philosophy, the nincteenth might fitly be called the age of History. It has revolutionised our relation to Reality and radically changed the method of our work, for it has grasped the fact that the present existential order is the result of a long and slow development, and has taught us to appreciate the present as a link in a continuous chain. The historical temper won its first victories in the domain of the Spiritual Life. It is not natural science that has introduced it into philosophy, but rather philosophy that has introduced it into natural science. Natural science, however, has linked it more closely with actual experience, and thus made it more intimate and invasive, securing, indeed, its dominance in every department of life. This triumph of the historical idea involved drastic changes in our view of life and thought and action; but these changes, upsetting though they were, yet seemed, in their influence on the strength and truth of the whole modern position, to be pure,

unadulterated gain. For what have we been given? A broader basis, more vigour of movement, an exhaustless profusion of individual constructions; in addition, a clearer insight, a more balanced judgment, a closer interlinking of all the constituent elements of existence; finally, an incentive to follow up for ourselves the clue that has been transmitted to us, a call to co-operate actively in the great work of the universe. All this, it appeared, lent the new way of thought an incontestable superiority over the old.

Even religion cannot escape the influence of so deep-reaching a change. Religion, too, must make room for the new idea, and find in Becoming a clue to the knowledge of Being. But in the case of religion, and especially in the case of Christianity, the collision between Old and New is especially violent, since the older outlook embodies a treatment of history which has gradually grown to be part of its very nature, and differs *in toto* from the newer method. It represents religion as coming to us from a lofty peak that towers high above our capacity and our performance, a peak to which for all time we must turn our gaze in boundless veneration, seeking guidance from it for our own journey. This inaccessible summit has been brought right down into our human lives by one marvellous deed, a self-revelation of God, and thus no change of human condition can affect it in the least. Our main task must ever be to keep in its pristine, uncontaminated form what was gained at this high-water mark of our history, and pass it on intact to all succeeding generations. Thus was our gaze turned ever on the past, and

even the remotest future held in these matters no prospect of a change.

Now this whole system of belief has been shaken to its foundations by the development of the new historical method, which has probed all the deeper for the fact that it has usually worked slowly and from within outwards. It has been the aim of the method to link the world's work more closely with the solitary splendour that so towers above it, to explore the surroundings of the summit, discover lines of connexion, and so narrow more and more effectively the zone of separation. In the end, even where the Supreme still maintains its pre-eminence, it comes to be regarded as the culmination of a wider movement, and, precisely for this reason, as part of a larger whole; only in the context of the whole can it fully unfold its nature. When we cease to look solely at this one Supreme Point and extend our observations over the whole field of history, we inevitably come to alter our conception of the forces that are operative. The sharp antithesis between human and divine gradually disappears. Man is summoned to do his part in the work, and is exalted in the doing of it, provided he discerns in what he does some element of eternal truth. The Divine, on the other hand, becomes spiritually nearer and more intimate. We would thus seem to have secured more inward unity for life, and a broader basis for religion.

And if the new method, as applied to a single religion, impels us to attach a greater importance to the influence of varying time-conditions, so is it also with the relations of one religion to another.

Where all multiplicity has behind it the unity of one unbroken movement in the light of which it seeks to be understood, then our judgment cannot be sharply alternative, taking the form of an Either—Or. We are rather bound to expect that every variety of religion will possess some element of reason, and the rigour of an absolute point of view yields to the leniency of a more relative outlook. It becomes the practice to regard all religions as diverging streams of a common movement, not all possessed of equal value, while yet none is destitute of all value. Hence a more liberal and open-minded attitude towards the rich diversity of historical types, a more friendly interchange between one type and another, greater plasticity in our way of viewing and handling the material.

Nor is the influence of the historical temper apparent only in the arrangement of material: it affects also the material, the facts themselves, and this chiefly through the development and application of historical criticism. It is only the modern consciousness that has fully realised the extent to which our own subjective condition influences our conception of the environment, and especially of the past, the way in which we build up our world through our own ideas and opinions, our feelings and strivings, our wishes and our expectations. From our first acceptance of a fact through all our subsequent acquaintance with it, our own subjectivity is ever busy exercising its transforming influence. All historical tradition must thus be subjected to the keenest scrutiny, but there is a quite unique interest in the applica-

tion of such scrutiny to the fundamental historical facts of religion. In a sphere where the soul has been stirred to a passionate storm of hope and longing, and the wishes of the heart have crystallised into definite shape, where the total impression has been so strong as to militate against any sober weighing of individual points of detail, should we not naturally expect that historical criticism would have to do more than the usual amount of ordering and readjustment? And the expectation has been justified. We have had to give up much that we held dear: our store of assured truths has suffered serious diminution. By way of compensation we can indeed feel greater pleasure in that which we still keep, since we can be confident in the justice of its claims. It is, moreover, a great victory for clearness and truth when those ideal Forms which absorb life's interest step forth in clear outline from the veil of mist in which an old tradition had enshrouded them.

All this might at first sight seem pure gain. And, indeed, it is, so long as we are dealing merely with science. There can be no question as to the improvement in our processes of clarifying and systematising our material. But it is a question whether the gain for science is immediately also a gain for religion, whether the interests of the two are not in direct antagonism. Science seeks to arrange all manifoldness in one unbroken system: religion is impossible without a contrast, a clear discrimination of the Divine from the human. It demands sublimity and its counterpart, reverence; but the world of the exact sciences can find no room for such conceptions. Thus, in particular,

the historical view, by the clear light it throws on persons and events, seems to destroy precisely that element in them which made them the objects of religious veneration—the element of uniqueness, transcendence, miracle. With good reason did our greatest poet call miracle the dearest child of faith. A religion entirely devoid of it is a self-contradiction. The only question is what we are to understand by it. But exact science refuses to tolerate it in any sense whatever.

The progress and success of historical criticism sets the problem before us in a very clear light. This criticism, by a laborious mastering of detail, has at length effected a revolution in the whole position. The older faith made a sharp distinction of sacred history from profane, separating the sanctuary from the stir of the market-place. That within the sacred precincts action should take a different line, and a supramundane Order reveal itself in the working of miracles, could scarcely excite surprise. Things here were on a larger scale, the oppositions were sharper, the character of the action more definite and decisive. The more than earthly majesty with which faith had clothed this sphere was believed to be matter of immediate perception. In the radiance that streamed from it, any analysis of the total impression or critical estimate of varying accounts was quite impossible. Thus gaps in the tradition, inconsistencies and contradictions were never noticed. In its unbroken unity it appealed to man's inner nature as whole to whole.

Then came historical criticism, and claimed this sphere also. The mere fact that such criticism

pursued, as a matter of course, precisely the same procedure here as in every other department of history, militated against the separation of sacred and profane which had hitherto prevailed: it put them both on the same level, treated each as part of a greater whole. Every advance in the work went to dim the brightness of the halo that had hitherto surrounded the persons and events of sacred history, and the clear light of day showed, in many respects, a different picture from that which we had before imagined. We can no longer deny that there is but scanty confirmation for many a story that once we confidently believed, that there are often grave discrepancies and even contradictions in different accounts and versions, and this not only in matters of detail, but in matters of main importance. And even when in the end we find again what once we accepted with such confidence, yet it is not the same thing. For the facts have lost that immediacy and self-convincingness which are necessary to make them fully effective. The very fact that a thing is made to depend upon a complicated process of reasoning, that we have to settle many doubts and difficulties before we can again accept it, makes it something different from what it was before; and though we may understand it better, the old intimacy of relation is destroyed.

We must remember also that, in matters of history, to see a thing more exactly is to distinguish it from ourselves, and thereby to weaken, if not totally to preclude, its immediate influence on our life. The Here and the Beyond are no longer included within one common tract of existence,

but they part asunder. We can no longer see the one in the light of the other, no longer let the Beyond fuse with our own life, or unhesitatingly transfer to it our own peculiarities, as we once did. How ingenuously did the Renaissance artists, and also the Dutch School, fashion and clothe their saints in the garb of their own age, thus bringing them right into their own lives! A similar attempt is being made to-day in all honesty of intention, but it will no longer succeed, since there is lack of that assured faith which brings the Divine down into the human, and lifts the human up to the Divine. We need something eternal to bind different ages together, but this eternal has grown dim amid our doubts and struggles. If, however, in sacred no less than in profane history, we are concerned only with the human, then we cannot put aside the question whether time-events, that are outwardly so remote from us, can yet profoundly move our inner life, and help us in any really essential way; whether indeed they must not renounce their religious significance.

Still more serious is the danger which threatens religion from the attempt to bring all the facts of life within the sweep of a single movement. We saw that the new thought tended to bring human and Divine into closer contact: it is a natural development of this tendency that the human should claim for itself what had previously seemed to be a function of the Divine, and that at the same time religion should become merely a part of a more general civilising movement, and should lose that transcendent quality which alone made

it immune from the changes and fashions of civilisation. The first result of this new tendency is to create serious difficulties round the Absoluteness that is so essential to the truth of religion; the eternal is made ever more subject to the temporal, and in the end is absorbed by it altogether. The process runs through several phases, but so long as there is no victorious reaction the final dissolution is inevitable. The first step is to say that religion in every age, if it would effectively influence that age, must present truth in a form that is appropriate to it. This is a requirement that in itself is perfectly just, though there is a certain danger in it so long as the boundary between what religion asserts and what the age demands is not more closely defined. The requirement, however, does not stop at this. We are asked to believe that religion in general must correspond to the condition of the age, that it must spring from the movement of the age. If it is to be a motive-force in our life, then it must take its form not from a dead past, but from a living present. But one age passes into another, and requirements change. Much that was venerated in earlier times degenerated at a later date into sheer superstition. Who will guarantee that our own convictions shall not some day share the same fate? Moreover, how could religion work vigorously to counteract the tendencies of the very age that produced it? If we give up an eternal truth, do we not also renounce our belief in religion as a directing and controlling power?

Thus in the complete assimilation of religion to its Age there is danger lest it become a mere

shadowy semblance. And even the right to this modicum of existence is not uncontested. The advance of the historical method, with the relativity it implies, ends by forcing on us the question whether religion as a whole is not just a transitory phenomenon, a "historical category," a phase in man's development necessary to the history of mankind, but now at last outworn. Positivism has formulated this view more precisely. It regards religion as an anthropomorphic interpretation of the universe, justified at the outset by the necessity of securing some initial movement of spiritual life. Little by little, however, it has been forced to make way for a scientific, objective, positivistic mode of thought, whose complete victory no one can for a moment doubt. Thus the religion that we still have to-day is only a survival from a remote past; no wonder that it strikes us as foreign. So reasons Positivism. And though the reasoning belongs primarily to a particular school, yet it has a far-reaching influence on the common life outside. The partial recognition here accorded to religion is far more dangerous to it than the open attacks of the eighteenth century, which set it down straight away as a mere device of sly magicians and deceiving priests.

Thus, from the historical point of view, religion seems doomed. It is not easy to see at once how any check can be set to the stream of Becoming, which seems to absorb religion into its own dissolving tide. But the enemy of religion would be triumphing too soon were he to believe that he had finally settled with her, and that she had

vanished into thin air, while he could point in contrast to a solid and unassailable residuum of culture. For we only need to look a little further, to probe a little deeper, in order to see that the upheaval wrought by thinking exclusively in terms of mere time does not affect religion only, but the whole of life, and even undermines the very foundations of science in which we placed such implicit trust.

The transformation of all Reality into a stream of Becoming—provided we follow it up to the bitter end, and do not stop arbitrarily in the middle—destroys all truth and empties life of all its content. Reality itself seems nothing more than an ephemeral world of shadows. Truth, in any and every meaning of the word, is possible only in contradistinction to the limitations and fluctuations of time. If we have nothing that we can oppose to time, then man and man's opinions are the sole arbiter of what we are to look upon as good and true. There is no longer any standard which will afford a measure of his capacity and act as a check on arbitrary caprice. Thus all the solid consistency of things is broken up, and every fresh step in the disintegrating process means a further dissolution of the time-stream into mere momentary incidents, a further reduction of the truth of time into a passing opinion of the hour. Has not the nineteenth century had a sufficiently trying experience of swift reactions in taste and temper? We need only look at the history of Art to see how hurriedly one wave of fashion has followed another, how quickly acclamation has passed into denuncia-

tion, and how that which was thought to be lifting us to new heights has shortly afterwards been labelled as folly and delusion. The individual fails to realise the dubiousness of these changes, because he thinks only of himself and of the moment. It is just at his particular point that he believes full truth to be attained. What passes at the moment for "modern" is incomparably superior to all else. But let him think on a little; let him reflect that what he respects to-day as modern will soon become outworn and obsolete, that its successor will share the very same fate, and so on and so on, without any solid and lasting result accruing from all the endless toil. Must we not then conclude that all our work is vain, and would not this conviction of futility arrest every vital impulse, and put an end to all joy in active creative effort? Moreover, what do we make, on this view, of reality as a whole? It becomes a mere change from one state to another, an ebb and flow, a kindling and extinction; there is no continuance, no meaning, no profit in it all. The transformation of reality into a mere flight of momentary presentations makes it into something ghostlike, a thing half-way between being and not-being. Everything is strung on the slender thread of becoming, and if anything falls from it, it falls into the abyss of nothingness which swallows up all that is best and most ideal in human nature. Here, then, we have no true life, but only the will to live, a longing and grasping after a life that yet can never be attained. The futility of a life like this—a life entirely adrift on the stream of Becoming—has never been felt more keenly than

by the Hindus. They imagined the spirits of their dead calling to the living: "We were what you are; you will be what we are." But are not we ourselves more conscious every day of the inward contradiction, the nothingness, of a life such as this? Amid all our dazzling outward successes, should we have so little joyousness at heart, if we had not begun to feel confused as to the meaning of the Whole, if amid all the stir and bustle we were not painfully aware that we had no firm anchorage, no steadfast truth?

But the very fact that we perceive our want goes to prove that we are not altogether merged in the stream, that we do not live only in the present. If there were not something in us continually forcing us to look beyond the fleeting moment and seek something more than its satisfaction, if we were like mere insects of a day, we could not be conscious of any discomfort. But that the longing for something permanent—nay, eternal—is more than a vague mood, and can translate itself into deed and achievement, is made particularly clear by precisely that branch of knowledge which might at first sight seem to discountenance all permanence—that is, by history itself, history understood as a distinctively human movement, and properly distinguished from history in the wider sense. If historical method has of late, especially under the influence of the doctrine of development, added nature to its other fields of study, this should not blind us to the fact that the story of Nature and the story of Spirit are fundamentally different in kind. In the external world we witness the gradual and the age-

long accumulation of effects; the great is simply the aggregate of innumerable small increments; the combination and interaction of forces result in the formation of highly complicated and differentiated structures. Modern Geology illustrates this very clearly. There is a long past behind us, and only by rehearsing all its successive stages can we gain clear insight into the meaning of the present. But Nature has not herself experienced this whole series of events; she has not transmuted this manifoldness into a personal life. One thing has followed on another, but the connexions have always been purely external.

Quite otherwise is it in the case of man, in so far at least as he ceases to be purely natural, and builds up over against Nature a world of Culture. For all culture implies an endeavour to prevent certain events, deeds, and personalities from drifting into gradual oblivion, an endeavour to keep them ever present and living by dint of some personal exertion. There is no culture which does not call upon us to take up the challenge that is thrown down by Time, the great destroyer. At first our effort may be limited to simply handing down certain noteworthy occurrences, but soon the achievements of our inward life—Religion, Law, and so forth—become confirmed in custom, and thus a bond is established between different epochs. Less and less does life depend for sustenance on the passing moment. To an ever greater extent the present assimilates the past, and can no longer remain subject to the changing wishes and caprices of a day.

The full significance of this treatment of history

from the distinctively human standpoint is first seen when we detach ourselves from the contemplation of one particular people, and look abroad over the whole range of human kind. It then becomes very clear that men are bound together by an inner fellowship far more than they are by any nearness of outside contact, and that here, despite all fluctuations, there is something that abides. Enigmatical monuments, obscure inscriptions, rise from the ruins of half-forgotten towns. If in spite of difficulties we attempt to read their riddle and are successful, what is it that drives us to the task, and what do we gather from our success? Surely this, that our spiritual organisation has remained the same, that the character of our thinking has not changed with the changing epochs, that we are animated to-day by the same old longing for happiness, that our feeling and striving, though clothed in a different garb, remain essentially unaltered. Nor would we merely understand the past. We would fain gather from it—and especially from the supreme moments of its creative activity—an inspiration for our own life; and at the root of this desire is the conviction that these great moments witnessed the entrance of some element of high value which they can transmit to us, whereas we ourselves could never have discovered it. Thus we reverently appropriate the golden period of Greek culture, the beginnings of Christianity, the dawn of the Modern world; and this we could not do if we did not feel that these great epochs were not wholly involved in time, but that, amid all that was peculiar to their own age, there

was some element in them that transcended time, and could be transmitted to all times. Now if we unite these several epochs in our thought, we obtain a picture of spiritual history and of our relation to it very different from the dissolving view with which we started—a view so changeful as to threaten the very existence of truth. For instead of merely drifting along with time, history now transcends time. By distinguishing between perishable and imperishable, that which grows old and that which is always young, it seeks to build up out of the toils and struggles of time a realm of truth, to which, as to a steadfast star, we may attach our own life. From this point of view, an interest in that which lies behind us is not a flight from the present into some remote and alien past, but an endeavour, by the help of every period of time, to form a present that can transcend time. Surely we could not so link ourselves to that which is strange to us, if there were not the same eternal Order operating there and here, an Order in which all that is deepest in our human nature has its root.

But all that we can ask of such an eternity or discover within it remains but an incoherent dream, unless we recognise in it a new kind of Life and Being which has all its resources within itself. But on our theory of the Spiritual Life as in process of realising its independence, we are indeed compelled to this recognition; the Spiritual Life, as we understand it, being the ultimate and self-sufficing source of all Reality. Even the most cursory scrutiny of the Spiritual Life must make it quite obvious that all of truth and good that it

develops claims a validity that is independent of time. Were it not for this superiority to time, spiritual striving would have no inward stability, and would degenerate into a mere instrument for the attainment of human ends. It is this and this alone which enables it to keep its own aims steadily in view, and use its own unique resources for the spiritual uplifting of man. We may have very different conceptions of the True and the Good, but the very effort to reach these values would be paralysed at its heart if we did not regard them as subsisting above all the change of human circumstance and opinion, and as representative of a new and timeless Order. The more we unify the Spiritual Life and conceive it as a new stage of Reality, the clearer does it become that it opens up to us a self-poised realm of eternal truth as opposed to the chance and change of temporal events, and that, for the first time, it gives our life a sure foundation.

This then is man's predicament, that the eternal Order in which, in last resort, his nature is rooted, does not present itself to him in finished form, but discloses its more detailed content only through the upward struggle of a long historical experience —that the basal fact is at the same time a difficult problem, nay, most difficult of all problems. History is only valuable—indeed, in its distinctively human sense, only possible—as being the medium through which the Eternal reveals itself, as being that whose whole existence is but a struggle for the eternal. A mere chronicling of change, of the rise and fall of nations and men, without reference to this eternal element, though

the claims of such work might be never so pretentious, would not be deserving the name of history. All genuine historical interest centres, according to our conception, in the endeavour to get beyond mere historicity, to free ourselves from that which is purely temporal in history and penetrate to a deeper level where, beyond the reach of the differences and distinctions of different epochs, the spiritual kinship of all life may be built up. We shall not then follow the older thought by riveting the spiritual movement to one particular point in history, thus stiffening it into immobility; nor, on the other hand, shall we join with the more modern school in throwing the main emphasis on the movement from one point to another, thus renouncing all reference to an Eternal. We shall rather interpret the whole movement as an unfolding of an eternal Order, and strive to reach, in every phase of it, its eternal element. In this way we may hope to do justice to the claims of both Time and Eternity, and, far from opposing freedom of movement to stability of basis—or, more briefly, freedom to depth—we can hold firm by both, and make each support the other.

If history in this spiritual sense require for its very subsistence an eternal truth, then religion and history can enter into a friendlier relation than was previously possible. In the first place, there can be no manner of doubt that it is religion which brings out with peculiar force and clearness the time-transcending quality of all creative, spiritual activity. Religion, more than anything else, makes a whole out of life, relates it to the

universe as a whole, and directs it to ultimate ends. It is in religion especially that the fundamental relation of man to reality becomes clearly defined. Here, if anywhere, the Spiritual Life must stamp itself as unique, and the whole continuous movement of time must subserve one single task that is independent of time. Religion, however, implies not only a transcendence of time, but also an entry into time. For indeed the fundamental truth by which it stands or falls is just this, that the Divine, without any obscuration of its nature, is present as a living force within the confines of our temporal, human existence, and there resists our acquiescence in the world as we find it. The more transcendent the Divine majesty, the more need is there that man should rise to higher levels, that he should counteract the debasing influences of his sense-life and his social environment by keeping vividly before his mind the eternal truth as it works itself out in history. This leaves free scope, however, for the manifold diversity of the different historical epochs, and we are enabled to appreciate a progressive movement even within the sphere of religion. Religion can influence man only by entering into his particular mode of existence; thus it absorbs some element of time, and is necessarily affected by the changes that take place in time. It is indeed only in the medium of time that it can bring man little by little to a full recognition of its truth. But this does not mean that its own substance passes under the dominion of time. On the contrary, in virtue of this very substance, it is compelled to test and sift without ceasing all

that time can proffer, and, strong in the certainty of possessing truth, to fight against everything that misunderstands or defaces it. If, then, religion has to appear in a garb that is suited to the condition of the age, it must yet reserve to itself the right of selecting from out the prevalent confusion that which is genuinely essential to the age, and therefore in all probability related to the truth. It is only as helping us to truth that time can have any value either for the Spiritual Life or for religion. But once let time be understood in this way, and it becomes at once of priceless value, since it is only through the movement of history that we can fully possess ourselves of that eternal element in which our very being has its root.

In the light of such ideas we begin to see why it is especially in the case of religion that particular times and particular personalities are able to acquire a peculiar significance and an abiding value. If it is generally true that such spirituality as we find in human existence is wont to be nothing more than a poor little addition to another order of living whilst the epochs of original creative activity remain rare high days and holidays, it is in religion more particularly that this contrast between the petty and the heroic reaches its highest point of tension. Nowhere are the limitations of cumulative mediocrity more patent; nowhere does greatness seem so truly an irruption, a revelation of a higher Order. Such greatness has indeed a historical setting, which conditions it in certain ways, gives it a certain local colour, helps to mould the particular form

of its immediate manifestation. But its spiritual substance is no mere product of the age; it is indeed directly opposed to it, lifting it on to a level that were otherwise quite unattainable. It was when party-conflict raged fiercely, and civilisation was given over to a refined sensualism that Jesus proclaimed—nay, embodied—a world of deep peace and childlike purity. His true greatness lay not in certain particular doctrines he enunciated, nor yet in the feelings that actuated him, or the claims that he made. All these things might have been there without him; had there been nothing more, there would be some plausible ground for thinking greatness to be a mere combination of particular qualities, as a certain order of narrow intelligence is never weary of maintaining. If greatness be only that, then how are we to account, for instance, for the beginnings of Christianity? How came it to pass that this particular point of life was the fountain-head of so mighty a movement, that old ideals were shattered, and new ones arose, that the whole previous balance of life was upset and previous standards failed to satisfy, that a mighty longing took possession of mankind, a stormy unrest which even now, after hundreds of years, is not allayed? Is not all this a proof that new sources were unsealed, new currents set in motion, that the whole life of a higher Order became wonderfully near and intimate, overwhelmingly forceful and penetrating? If, thanks to our belief in the independence of a transcendent Spiritual Life, we are able to distinguish the spiritual substance from its temporal and existential form, then we can admit without

reserve that the exact shape in which greatness is clothed is determined by the conditions of the age; we can claim for these conditions full freedom of development; but, at the same time, we can keep in close touch with the spiritual substance, and from this as a starting-point hope to win the new life. For in the whole field of religion there is nothing that can be more effective for good than to realise with vividness and warmth of conviction the indwelling presence of an elemental spontaneity or power, and to realise, moreover, that this power has might to fashion the spiritual life, after its own distinctive manner, into a universe that shall contain within itself the final satisfaction of every spiritual need. Once we recognise that here we have a unifying power unique in kind, capable of refashioning in its own way the whole circle of existence, we are in possession of a primal, fundamental fact that no historical criticism, however acute, can take away from us. Such criticism, indeed, may easily exceed its prerogative and fall into error, if it seek to derive unity from manifoldness, self-consciousness from environment, creative power from the conditions of its manifestation, if it fail to see that arranging the wood upon the pile is not the same thing as producing the spiritual spark which alone can fire it into flame. To bring everything into one single chain of causal connexion, reducing all existence to a dead level, is to destroy not only religion, but every kind of spiritual transcendence, and therefore all genuine spiritual culture.

The clear distinction we are here drawing be-

tween the substance of religion and its existential form permits us, then, to acknowledge at one and the same time the stability of an eternal truth and the freedom of historical movement. But it does something more. It provides us with a new historical method which is free from the dangers and limitations of other methods. The modern tendency to base life on history threatened from the outset to discourage the full exercise of individual initiative, and this danger has been continually increasing. The modern movement aimed at setting life on a broader basis than the Enlightenment had given it. It sought to put particular epochs and persons in the setting of larger and more stable systems, to bring greater satisfaction to life and labour, more individuality, more brightness and colour. But it worked on the tacit assumption that history was a realm of Reason, and that this reason communicated itself, pure and unclouded, to every one who welcomed it with an open mind and a childlike, receptive spirit.

Now the course of investigation has not only shown this Reason to be a more and more debatable assumption, it has also shown that the relation of past and present involves far more serious complications than were suspected at the outset. In the case of the Spiritual Life one period does not arise from another with the quiet inevitableness of organic growth, but just as the Spiritual Life itself speedily declines so soon as it ceases to be continuously re-created, so the present must, in last resort, shape its own life. Its relation to the past is not something fixed and

given; it has always to be ascertained anew. The present will always mould its conception and judgment of the past by its own conviction as to the nature of truth. Thus, spiritually speaking, the past is by no means a finished story. It is always open to the present to discover, to stir up, something new in it. Even the past is still in the making.

Now the right which the present thus arrogates to itself—when once it looks beyond the mere moment to a truth that holds all time in its embrace—meets with serious obstruction from the merely historical way of thinking. The close and careful resuscitation of the past, with its accumulating wealth of material, crowds out all questions as to the truth of the content as a whole. We are quite content to revere as reasonable that which comes to us broad-based on reality itself. To do so is all the more attractive because it seems as though we might thereby draw on the spiritual reserves of history without making any exertion of our own. We are thus led farther and farther along the path of easy-going, passive enjoyment, till finally we are in danger of losing all desire for a life of our own and becoming the complaisant train-bearers of distant ages. We display marvellous industry and aptitude in transplanting ourselves on to the soil of bygone times. We seek to understand the motives of past ages, and to substantiate their claims. We think and live ourselves into them to such an extent that they almost seem to belong to us. And we forget the while that, valuable as all this is for science, it never can and never will be a substitute for a life

of our own; that instead of a full, true life we are choosing but a fragment, an illusion; that, for all this wealth in our historical treasure-house, we may be poor and starved in our inmost soul. Pictures instead of realities, science instead of conviction, erudition instead of personality—that is the end of it all, the final result of that enervating historicity which to-day so oppresses our spiritual energy, more especially in Germany, and is all the more dangerous in that it is so closely allied to much that is best in us. But where, in these matters, is the danger of which we could not say the same?

If, however, we are to struggle free from this historical pedantry, with its abandonment of present interests; if it is the task of the twentieth century, by developing a new type of life, to find some way of reconciling the rational and the historical methods which the two previous centuries have respectively upheld—then there is but one course open: we must establish history within an eternal Order, and understand it as the revelation of this Order on the plane of our human life. How else could history retain its value without at the same time usurping the main place in life?

If an unreserved devotion to history thus threaten to relax the spiritual tension of our lives, dangers of another kind arise when it is freely admitted that there is a higher order of truth in history than the merely historical, while yet such truth is limited to one particular point, whence alone its influence can spread to surrounding regions. This was characteristic of the older

forms of religion, and nowhere more markedly present than in Christianity. So profoundly influential is this older type of thought even for our modern life that we must now subject it to a closer analysis. And first we ask why does it subordinate everything to one supreme and dominating event? The underlying assumption is clear: religion has its own kind of history, a history which will have nothing to do with a gradual progress on the lines of a purely natural development. It is patent to every one that the active, formative periods of religion have been few and far between. Many causes and circumstances have combined to produce them, and, looked at from an inner point of view, these constructive movements have always been decidedly above the level of their age. Since, then, their originating point showed them at their strongest and purest, it was natural that religion should conceive it her main task to keep the ideal that had been reached as intact as possible, to return to it again and again from the inevitable corruptions that crept into it through contact with the world, to draw again and yet again upon the inexhaustible source of the life that had once been revealed. Thus history, from the human point of view, might well seem to be a constant return upon old truth rather than a progressive advance towards new truth. It is indeed true that it is usually the early days of a religion which have given it its peculiar stamp, and defined for ever the guiding-lines of its activity.

There is much to be said for this view. It would be a shallow mind that could ignore or

obscure the distinction between a history of religion and a history understood as a natural evolution. Still, this conception of history could only claim an exclusive right on the understanding that the course of centuries could contribute nothing new to those problems of our life and being with which religion has to deal, that in this respect all the rest of life was but an ebb and flow of human sentiment and opinion, powerless to affect the impregnable rock of truth. Not only must the spiritual content of religion possess this immutability, but likewise the time-garment in which religion is clothed. Or rather, in regard to this fundamental fact, the very distinction between content and clothing must be rejected as derogatory to the Divine.

So it was thought for long, but no longer can we think so to-day. Our historical training has bred into us an aptitude for closer observation and clearer distinction, so that we cannot but reject as arbitrary the attempted separation of eternal and historical, substance and existence. Nor can we any longer accept the origins of a religion as being in their total composition eternal and Divine. We must first of all find out what is eternal and Divine in them, and disentangle it, that we may not, in blind devotion to the whole, confuse human and Divine, temporal and eternal, and thus harm precisely that which we are anxious to assist.

These considerations receive additional weight when religion is closely connected, as we have shown it should be connected, with the Spiritual Life as a whole, and when, further, it is recognised

that this life as operative among men shows development in certain essential respects as history progresses. Though these developments by no means affect the whole range of existence, though at first they are more of the nature of demands, or indeed of possibilities, still even as questions and tasks they exercise a great influence, not so much on individuals and groups as on the complex organisations of spiritual labour—that whole system which has been passing more and more from the arbitrary disposal of the human agent, and can never again come under his subjective control. As the result of these further developments we find labour acquiring a definite historical status which an individual here and there may ignore, but with which every one must reckon who would seek to augment the spiritual possessions of humanity and lift man on to a higher spiritual plane.

If, then, after the founding of a religion, it should happen that the form which the Spiritual Life takes among men should undergo essential modifications, then it must be highly disastrous to religion if it still hold rigidly to its older type, thus placing the Eternal that we need in bondage to something of a temporal nature that we must discard. For it is not the mere wish and whim of man that make us discard it, nor yet mere unbelief and self-conceit, but rather the imperative bidding of the Spiritual Life, which we may not refuse. This bondage to the past may easily result in narrowing life, repressing conviction, alienating that which should be most intimate. The main danger, however, is in the straining and snapping of the bond that subsists between religion and

spiritual work. Religion threatens to lag behind, and finally fall right away from this spiritual work. It may easily come to be regarded as the product of a lower order of development which the progressive movement of the world's history has passed by, as a purely human contrivance that cannot make good its claim on the territory of the Spiritual Life. Now whether since the founding of the positive religions—and especially of Christianity—changes of this far-reaching order have taken place, is a question of fact which can only be decided by experience. Experience, however, answers it with an unhesitating affirmative. The development of modern culture has not only introduced many specific changes into the conditions which prevailed in early Christendom, it has revolutionised the whole fashion of life and work.

The change affects first and foremost the world of thought. Recent centuries have radically transformed our conception of nature, of history, and of man himself in his psychical and spiritual life. All the new knowledge that we owe to the multiplied labours of many combines to widen our thought and life most effectively, and forces us to frame our conceptions on a vast and cosmic scale. Nor is it merely a question of widening the extent of their application. For though our thought naturally dwells first on the recently discovered endlessness of the visible world and the consequent dwindling of man's own sphere, yet the inward change goes still deeper. As spiritual work takes on a more definite stamp, and is thrown up in clearer relief, it finds the immediate setting of our

human life too small for its tasks, and to the mere subjectivity of the experient it opposes a creative activity which has its source in the necessities of certain spiritual organisations, in the self-developing powers of whole provinces of life. This affects life in its inmost essence. Whereas earlier ages sought this essence in the relation of one personality to another—personality, too, being always conceived anthropomorphically;—whereas, for them, the inward feeling that grew out of this relation was the very soul of reality, modern movements and developments show the strongest objection to thus assigning a central position to personality and a personal life: they insist on a wider conception of life, and they find it in the idea of an impersonal process impelled by an objective necessity, a process which, whether natural or spiritual, controls all human labour. Man who for long had shrunk back and held aloof from the environing world would now fain come into closer relation with it and win a direct share in the life of the universe. This is the element of truth which inspires the often very misty effusions of modern pantheism, and gives it its hold over the minds of our contemporaries. This type of thought finds anthropomorphism and mythology in many an aspect of the traditional religion that once seemed a pure expression of Divine truth, and not only so, but it feels the whole atmosphere of those earlier times to be too narrow and oppressive, and bursts their bonds with the force of an elemental passion. There may be much that is problematic in this longing for space and greatness, with its tendency to obscure the more ethical questions; and often,

too, the spiritual necessity may go together with a highly questionable interpretation of it on man's part; but the very raising of the problems has made the old position untenable; all the labour and acuteness we may spend on its defence cannot retain for it that inward sympathy of mankind which even religion cannot dispense with.

But it is not only our thought-world which has been profoundly modified since the early days of Christianity. The whole tone of life is different —the feeling that animates our effort and determines our relation to the environment. It was a weary and self-distrustful world, an age of decadence, in which early Christianity had to work and take shape. The yearning of the time was for firm support rather than for freedom of movement; for rest and peace, not for progress and struggle; for safety and release from burden, not for independence and personal responsibility. The attempt to meet this demand was bound to give a certain bent to religion, and leave on it the impress of the very age whose tendencies it was really combating. Thus we have the division into organisation and authority on the one hand, subordination and devotion on the other; a longing for visible embodiment of the unseen truth, a delight in the miraculous, incomprehensible, magical; a predominantly passive religious character, despite all busy activity in good works. We know how different all this is to-day, and what a change has swept over mankind. There is fresh zest in life, a joyous longing for active, creative work, for progress and change, for independence and personal responsibility. It is a

movement which has penetrated the whole of life, and it cannot leave religion untouched. A conflict with the older form is inevitable: if religion persist in identifying herself with it, she must share its destruction; but if the truth in the new movement be recognised and freely appropriated by religion herself, then religion must assume a more active form and undergo a very thorough remodelling. The Reformation began the task, but did not carry it to completion; for while it seized on the new life-impulse at its deepest and most vital point, yet in developing its ideas it clung in many respects to the old tradition. So now, when the religious problem is again reviving, we have once more to meet the demand that faced the Reformation. Men of every creed are longing for a more active religious life, a greater output of religious energy. But the demand is not so easy of fulfilment as it might seem. It is not sufficient to induce a greater movement in the Subject, to arouse in him greater warmth of feeling. Activity in the true sense is possible only through a transformation of the whole existing Order. We are here face to face with the great problems of universal history. The final solution we may not see, but even the working towards it induces a better understanding between religion and that phase of the Spiritual Life which the world's historical development has made dominant to-day.

That Christianity is capable of assimilating these great historical movements without thereby sacrificing a truth which no movement can affect, is a point we shall have presently to prove. Here we are only concerned to show that such assimila-

tion is possible only when we regard and treat history after the manner we have been describing. If the background of history be something that transcends history, if the value of history lie not so much in the total immediate impression it conveys as in the spiritual content that is at work in it, then we cannot complacently accept without further ado whatever is offered us, but must use our own judgment, must sift and adjust, must restore a community of feeling between our own and other periods, must win by our own exertions some basis of mutual, fruitful contact between present and past. Spiritual work must always select the present as its basis of operation, and if anything from the exhaustless storehouse of history is to be linked with our own life, it must be able to show itself continuously effective; it must no longer wear the aspect of a mere past. Such a present, however, does not come to us unsought; we must win it by our spiritual labour; we must transcend the merely momentary present. Thus everywhere there is a call to greater activity; no room is left for helpless drifting, passive acquiescence, cowardly retreat upon the past. It becomes clear that history can help us only in proportion to the amount of spiritual strength we put into it; that it is not the source of our spiritual life, but only the medium in which it is developed; that the highest we know, in religion as in history generally, is revered by us not for its own sake, but as being the revelation and actualisation of eternal truth. Were it otherwise, the worship of man would be substituted for the worship of God.

But the indispensable presupposition of all this spiritual work is the immediate presence of the eternal Truth through the whole course of history, its existence at any and every epoch as a possible refuge from the stream of Becoming. But to admit this is to break decisively with the older thought, which concentrated the whole fulness of the Eternal at one single point, and limited all subsequent achievement to the task of loyal adherence and faithful imitation. Such a view inevitably narrows the expression of our activity. What we do not ourselves build and fashion, what does not depend on our decision for its existence and influence, can never elicit our whole-hearted energy. Take the case of Christianity. So long as it was occupied in a fierce struggle with a hostile world, it still had room for the idea of one common work employing the collective energy of the community, each individual being responsible at his own station for carrying on his share of the development. According to Origen, the most influential thinker of the Eastern Church, the complete fusion, the "interweaving" of the human nature, and the Divine, began in Jesus, and, by reason of our solidarity, the human nature became Divine not only in Jesus, but in all who accepted the new life he had revealed. The true disciple must not only believe in Christ, but himself become a Christ, and, through his life and suffering, work for the good of the brethren. When Christianity had triumphed, this line of thought fell into disfavour in the life of the Church. It now becomes important to revive it, though under altered conditions and in a new form. If

religion is to have the activistic character which we are obliged to insist on, then we must recognise its development as a continuous work in which all must co-operate.

Any increase in activity that we may expect as the result of such changes tends at the same time to make life more universal, and thought more broad and free. How could we strive towards an all-embracing truth, independent of the peculiarities of this or that period, how could we seek to make this truth the very atmosphere of our life, if we did not recognise a universal that transcends the particular, and did not interpret the manifoldness of the particular as a mere unfolding of this universal? The characteristic mark of the Eternal is not a capacity to maintain itself consistently unchanged amid all the changes of time. It is rather the ability to enter into the varied life of different epochs without losing itself in them, to manifest in them all its transcendent power, to pursue in them all the same end of freeing time from its purely temporal character.

In the light of this context we need not fear that our interpretation will land us in an empty, ghostly generality, and thin away the substance of our life. For it is a view that rests on the support not of an abstract being, but of an unoriginated, self-sustaining life, and it is in the character, the substance, the whole developing power of this life, not in doctrines and formulas abstracted from it, that the manifold is united into one. Undoubtedly true though it be that such life *quâ* spiritual implies certain beliefs

regarding reality, and is bound in some way to translate these beliefs into doctrines, yet the doctrines have value only in so far as they are embodiments of life, and as such they can quite well be open to change without any doubt being thereby cast upon the truth of the life in which they are grounded.

The acquisition of this more universal and activistic character will also tend to make the religious life more simple and immediate than we usually find it. It is of the utmost importance for the effective working and victorious advance of religion, that its truth admit of being realised in every man's experience, and that the appropriation of this truth serve to unfold that which is deepest and most central in the nature of each of us. It is the fundamental conviction of religion that the ultimate secrets of the cosmos declare themselves to the inmost soul and become man's personal possession; apart from such a conviction, religion could not claim to be central for life. That which is essential and necessary must at the same time be something that can be the subject of immediate experience. This essential factor, moreover, if it is to exercise its full influence, should not be confused with what is accidental or made to depend on it. It must be sharply distinguished from all else, and its demands brought out with complete clearness. But it is precisely Christianity that here confronts us with embarrassing complications, complications arising alike from its nature and its history. We shall shortly be concerned with showing in greater detail that Christianity embraces the whole of

life—its very widest range, its very deepest oppositions. This is already one reason why it should be less easily condensed into a simple formula than is the case with other religions. If, nevertheless, we are to insist on a plain simplicity in Christianity also, it will be a simplicity of no ordinary kind, presenting no ordinary problems. Moreover, the course of history has made many things remote and difficult to understand which to earlier ages were obvious enough, affording clear vision into eternal truths. For example, no matter how zealously the old doctrine of the Son's equality with the Father may be defended, we can never regain for it that paramount importance in the religious life which it once possessed. As a matter of fact, Christianity in its historical form has become far too complex and circumstantial. It is cumbered with much half-alien material that grows ever more burdensome and obstructive, and this must be weeded out if ever religion is to display the full force of its eternal truth, and make all men work for it—a requirement which is voiced very clearly by the needs and confusions of the time. We must then struggle for greater simplicity and immediacy in religion, for a sharper distinction of essential from non-essential, for the development of a characteristic unity of life, a selective unity that shall organise what is relevant to its purpose, and reject what is alien. Such a quest cannot be undertaken save by a Spiritual Life that transcends mere time and the finitude of man, and is able to bring time and eternity into the right relation. We have now to see what it is that this characteristic unity consists in. Shall

we find it? Will it stand out clear despite all the confusion of the present situation? This is the question that will decide whether the view we have adopted of time and eternity is one that can justify itself, whether religion is able to triumph over the changes of time, or whether it also shall be caught in the vortex of these changes and dragged down to destruction.

III

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

INQUIRIES concerning the nature of a historical religion, and therefore, too, concerning the nature of Christianity, are wont today to meet with a doubtful reception. For there is always a temptation to press the exhaustless variety of life into a conventional mould, and it seems hard to find a happy mean between vague generality and the rigid stereotyping of one particular form. We do not deny the dangers. They are certainly there, but our task is so imperative that we cannot allow ourselves to be daunted by them. It is imperative, if only on account of the many attacks that are being levied against Christianity at the present time. Perverse, shallow, often directly erroneous presentations have caught the ear of many of our contemporaries, warping their judgment in most extraordinary fashion. To fight against these misrepresentations is impossible, unless we understand clearly what it is that we have to defend. But even for us who are friends of the cause there is a certain value in reflection on the central issues of our thought-world. It may help us to meet with calmness and a sense of mastery that overwhelming multiplicity of impressions which pours in on us from the rapidly increasing division of labour,

and in particular from the widening field of historical research. That a compliant yielding to these impressions will leave us with nothing more than half-beliefs, and finally deliver us over to a destructive relativity, has already been made so clear to us that we cannot but welcome any counteracting influence. Thus we note with particular pleasure that Ernst Troeltsch, that leading spirit in the younger generation of German theologians, has brought this question into the foreground in his book entitled "The Absoluteness of Christianity," handling it with the depth and thoroughness that are characteristic of his work. We cannot emulate him here in pushing the problem back to its ultimate bases. Our present inquiry is on a more modest scale. But there is hope, nevertheless, that it may contribute its quota of usefulness to the task by carrying on, in regard to this problem, the line of thought already indicated in the previous sections; at the same time seeking to bring out clearly the unique character of Christianity as compared with other religions.

If we take the problem of life as our starting-point in seeking to ascertain the nature of the different religions, we shall not spend our time in hunting for a mysterious substance which lies behind phenomena, nor in pursuing some abstract formula; but, comprehending all life's manifestations into one Whole, we shall seek to refer them to the driving-power which sustains them, and to find some dominating central point whence we may throw light on their nature. We shall try to reach so far that we may catch the

life, so to speak, at its fountain-head, and look upon all that experience has to offer as an outcome from this primal source of power. Doctrines, institutions, emotional tendencies will have value only as witnessing to this deeper life: the extent to which they minister to it is the true measure of their importance. As they do not themselves supply the essence of religion, they cannot claim to be inviolable, but must be ready for every change which may be found necessary for the development of this deeper life within human experience. By "life," of course, we here understand not the mere individual's subjective states, but inward experience taken in its totality, a self-sustaining process, an unfolding of a unique spiritual reality. It is the character of this life and the end which it subserves in virtue of its relation to an Absolute Life, that constitutes the main mark of differentiation between the different religions, and determines the precise form which each one takes. Does the life offered us by this or that religion appeal to what is deepest in our nature? Is it capable of comprehending all that is most diverse and antagonistic in our experience? The more this is so, the more are we entitled to consider it as dominant and conclusive, the more truth will we find in its nature, so understood. It is in this sense that we would seek first of all to seize on the distinctive features of Christianity by making a general survey of the life it reveals, and then to trace how history verifies our conception.

If we start, then, from the life-process, we shall not have to deal with an endlessly-varied content,

such as our first impressions of the gay pageant of humanity might present to us. We shall only need to concern ourselves with a very limited number of possibilities. Leibniz's saying about Nature—that she is simple as regards principles, and endlessly varied as regards their application—is equally true of the fundamental forms of the Spiritual Life. There are very few clearly marked types between which our existence oscillates and from among which we have to make our choice. So it will be no laborious matter to arrive here at some definite conclusion.

In regard to the further question, however, as to where it is that the distinctive character of the different forms of life shows itself most clearly, it is precisely the most universal of the religious problems that gives us our clue. Discontent with the world as it is, till at last such a world becomes unendurable, is what drives the soul to religion. From religion we hope to gain that which we cannot gain from the world, but at the same time cannot do without. Thus the question that presses itself on us is the question where and how it is that we are conscious of a defect, a disturbance, a warping of existence, which will not allow us to rest. In a word, it is the problem of evil that is the winnowing-fan for religions as for persons, and it is their solution of this problem which is the real test of their pretensions. Here more than anywhere else life is concentrated into one question and one answer.

Now religions, in so far as they have any independence at all over against the rest of life, in so far as they reveal a distinctively spiritual temper,

fall under two main types: the religions of law and the religions of redemption. The former do not make any complete break with the world, nor do they demand a wholly new manner of being. What they miss in the world of experience is the moral order, the principle of righteousness, which they cannot be content to forgo. In order to realise it they invoke the aid of a higher Power, regulative and retributive in kind. In the light of this dispensation of righteousness they impose upon man stern commands, whose fulfilment brings lavish reward either here or hereafter, while heavy penalties threaten the transgressor. That man has an innate capacity for doing good and avoiding evil is never for a moment doubted. All that human effort needs to keep it on the right way is a quickening, strengthening, guiding hand.

Now this view of the problem and of the services of religion does not satisfy the religions of redemption. They go further. It is not this or that feature of the given Order which seems to them unsatisfactory. They regard it as an utter failure, rotten to the core and thoroughly irrational. Nothing short of a complete release from it and the introduction of a radically new Order can give life stability and value. Gradual improvement is not sufficient. There must be an entire revolution. It is this contention that first gives the religious problem its compelling force: here we have world against world, and all work seems vain, all gain illusory, unless we succeed in mounting to a new level and winning at the same time a new being. As the problem thus

gains in profundity, the religions of redemption inevitably come to regard the religions of law as mere preliminary stages.

But even the religions of redemption themselves are divided into two fundamentally different types—the Indian and the Christian. In the one case it is the very existence of the world, the general way in which things happen, that forces on a break with the given Order; in the case of Christianity it is merely the particular state of the world. For the Hindus the world is a realm of mere illusion and transitory becoming. As nothing in it is permanent, it cannot afford any stable happiness. We seize a thing with longing, and it slips through our hands. All life is suffering in so far as it takes illusion for truth, clings to it, wastes affection on it, and exposes itself constantly to bitter disappointment without any hope that things will ever be other and better. Thus the goal to strive for is emancipation from all this hollow illusion, and to this end we must be able to see through it, bringing our whole soul to the task. For it is in and through this insight that all our longing for such a world will collapse, and the passionate impulse to live will be totally extinguished. It is true that what we gain in this way is not a realm of positive content and happiness, but rather a condition of complete repose, a dying away of all the passions in a mist of love and sorrow, a state of pure passivity: whether, with the Brahman sages, we represent it by the image of a dreamless sleep, or, with the earliest Buddhist thinkers, we picture it as a total annihilation. In either case, the world and all its

unrest sink before the power of contemplation; repose steals over the whole being, a feeling of great relief as the heavy fetters crumble away—those fetters forged for man solely by illusion and in last resort, according to Buddhist conceptions, by the craving for life, by "thirst."

"Whom thirst conquers—thirst, the contemptible, that pours its poison throughout the world—for him will suffering grow as the grass grows. Who conquers thirst, the contemptible, that is hard to escape in the world, from him will suffering fall away like the water-drop from the lotus-flower."

These utterances of the Hindu conviction affect us by their simplicity and sincerity. But we must not allow ourselves to overlook the extent of their deficiencies and surrenders. They set the whole theme of life in a lower key; they deprive it of all strong stimulus. Here there is no love rushing to the rescue: each man takes the decisive step for himself alone. Consequently there is no world of inward life common to all men, no common struggle against the irrationality of existence. With all its subjective susceptibility, this life as a whole is cold. It lacks all warmth of personality; its strength lies far more in what it denies than in what it affirms.

Life as it meets us on Christian ground is very different. The passions by which it is sustained are incomparably more positive. Here, too, there is a strong vein of negation, but it is not the world in general that is repudiated, only the particular condition of the world at a given time; and this condition has been brought about not by any

natural necessity, nor yet by a mere misapprehension, but by man's free activity. If the bad, then, be conceived as a perversion of the good, there is no repudiation of existence as such. The impulse to live is not killed at its root. There is always hope that the bad, which originated with man's free act, will likewise be removed by it. But there are immense difficulties in the way. For the perversion goes so deep, the capacity for good is so maimed and mutilated, that it is held to be impossible for unaided human strength to make the move towards better things, and equally impossible that this should be effected by a gradual ascent, a slow improvement. What is needed, rather, is a complete revolution, a reconstituting of life, and only a power that is not of this world, only the Godhead Itself, can bring such a change to pass. The Christian conception of the way in which the change is wrought is that free love and grace wipe out the guilt, and a new life is founded on the basis of fellowship with God.

Simple as this life may at first sight appear, it involves changes and developments of the very first importance. Since at all its decisive turnings life depends on man's free activity, it acquires an essentially ethical character, and distinguishes itself sharply from all merely natural process. Again, since its main problem does not lie in its relation to the world, but rather in its relation to itself, to its own conceptions of the ideal, we attain for the first time a pure inwardness, an inward world teeming with great problems. The world that once was man's whole reality is now depressed to the status of a mere environment. Since the

inward processes now become all-important, and the critical turning-point lies chiefly within and not without, a history of the soul is for the first time possible. Thus, throughout, life and its tasks are conceived from an inward standpoint to an extent never before reached even approximately by any great world-religion.

But it is, above all, in the treatment of suffering that Christianity displays its distinctive character. By bringing suffering into the very forefront of life, and constantly dwelling upon it, it differentiates itself in a very special way from the old worldly wisdom, which advised that the soul should sheathe itself proudly in armour, and drive sorrow as far from it as possible. The division between these two views is not a mere question of taste; it depends on what the facts of our human existence really are. If it be true that it presents us with serious complexities, complexities that do not concern merely our relation to the external world, but affect the most intimate depths of the soul, if we see a severe struggle transpiring in man between the spiritual demands of his nature and his actual conduct, then it were as foolish to blame us for tackling these problems as it would be to reproach a doctor with caring for the sick rather than the healthy. Now since the experiences alike of history and of ordinary life show us that such is the truth, and only a shallow optimism can deny it, it is a step of momentous importance for the world's history that Christianity should for the first time have appreciated suffering as a whole, attacked it as a whole, undertaken to subdue it as a whole. For its concern with suffer-

ing does not imply any intention of surrendering to it, or lingering over it in weak sentimentality. The object is rather to rise by means of it to a higher level, and to confront it with a world of love and faith. It is true that in times of faint and feeble activity historical Christianity has shown too great a disposition to linger over its merely inward experience. It has not wrought its inward gain, as it should do, into the texture of the outer world, but rather tended to ignore such a world as subsidiary and immaterial. This, however, does not in any way alter the fact that the main tendency of Christianity is affirmative, though the life which it affirms is supernatural rather than natural. It is an affirmation which includes a distinct element of negation, a break with the merely natural. It has nothing of that wild craving for life, that "thirst" which the Hindus so rightly repudiated.

The characteristic combination of affirmative and negative which we find in the Christian life is further confirmed by the actual relation of these two elements in our human experience. For here we find that the No is not a transitional point that is swiftly past; it is not a mere means of bringing life to realise its own depth; it persists even after the Yes has appeared: it is, indeed, only through the contrast that its full force is first perceived. For however real the affirmation, it is in the first instance confined to the soul, to a region of faith and hope; the resistance of an alien and hostile world still remains unmet. Thus, under human conditions, life never attains a full and complete finality: it remains in perpetual oscilla-

tion between two opposite poles. Containing within itself the greatest contrasts—the highest summit of blissful perfection and the deepest abysses of sorrow and guilt—it must, in the constant passing from one to the other, dig ever deeper into itself, and create its own world. If intellectual concepts prove inadequate to the closer description of this world, the art of music is well able to deal with it. A Palaestrina and a Bach are here more eloquent than all the sages.

If, however, we want a fuller light on the changes that take place in the condition of our life, we can gain it by inquiring more closely into the quality of the affirmation with which Christianity confronts the complications of the world. The affirmations of religion always originate in a disclosure or revelation of the Divine. Thus it is the nature of this revelation that will determine the positive content of religion. Now in respect to this revelation, Christianity is far in advance of all other religions. For they limit God's intercourse with humanity to certain particular utterances, and, manifold though the relations may be, a wide gulf still separates God and man. Christianity, on the other hand, stands for a complete fusion of the two natures; the Divine in all the fulness of its splendour can enter into the human, and thus the human from its inmost depth can be lifted up into the Divine. Thus the Divine life becomes directly and immediately man's own. He shares in Its perfection, eternity, infinity, and is lifted secure above all the limitation and error of the world—above sorrow, misery, and guilt. It is this communion with the Divine that first gives

Christian truth its triumphant certainty, whereas the persistence of a gulf between human and Divine always conduces to uncertainty and doubt. The dogmatic formulation of this fundamental truth of Christianity—the doctrine of the Divine humanity of Christ—has, indeed, from the very outset been the cause of much confusion, and many honest adherents of Christianity are to-day unable to accept it. At no point is there greater need of insisting on the requirement we have already elaborated—the necessity of not riveting a fundamental fact to some particular point in history, but of treating this point simply as the high-water mark of a movement which embraces the whole of humanity, and recognising in this movement a continuous work, an activity which calls for constant renewal, a life-stream that is always flowing. This does not detract from the miraculous, transforming character of the entry of the Divine into the human, of the creation and preservation of a world of absolute truth amid all the limitations and errors of human existence. The marvel of the transformation is rather heightened than otherwise. Not, indeed, till the wider view be taken does it become really effective and able to sustain humanity in all the great crises of its history.

It is this entry of the Divine into man's sphere, with its inversion of the primitive order of things, that first gives the elements of the Christian life their full depth and force. Only thus can we do equal justice to its love and gentleness on the one hand, and to its seriousness and truth on the other. Christian love means something very much

more than is conveyed in the woefully shallow presentment of it lately indulged in even in popular romances. For it is no soft connivance at human weakness and error, no embellishing of the events of the world, no Yea and Amen to every pronouncement. It is characterised rather by an infinite seriousness, demanding, as it does, a new world and a new life which only the Divine Power can bestow. The task that devolves on man is not merely man's concern, a private matter of his own happiness, but it has a far-reaching effect on the ordering of the Whole, and is thus fraught with grave responsibility. It is not merely this or that particular good, but spiritual Being in general that is in question. The struggle is for a life of inward freedom, and therefore of truth, even in the present dispensation. It is about these poles of love and truth that the history of Christianity revolves. Prominence has been given sometimes to the one and sometimes to the other; their complete union is an ideal for all time. That its metaphysics should be ethical and its ethics metaphysical constitutes the peculiarity and the greatness of Christianity, and gives it also its lasting interest. Earlier ages have often made it too one-sidedly metaphysical. We moderns must beware of allowing it to degenerate into mere ethics.

Amid all these developments the greatness of Christianity comes out especially in its inclusiveness. It embraces the widest possible range of life's activities and experiences. In particular, it does not halt paralysed between the oppositions that it brings into such clear relief. It rises above them, and undertakes to overcome them. And

this not through sage reasoning and prudent calculation, but through the intervention of a transcendent fact, through the opening up of a new world grounded in Divine love—a world which offers a sure standing-ground from which to face the conflict, and also enables us to aim at a radical transformation of human existence.

It is just this concurrence of measureless movement and assured rest, this position at once in and above all the struggles of the world, that gives to the Christian life a distinctive stamp and an inner independence. Clearly Christianity does not consist in the performance of certain services within the framework of a life larger than itself, nor does it merely add some new features to an existing situation. It grows up as a life of independent content and mode of organisation, a unique reality which, for the first time, gives access to a Spiritual Life that is purely self-sustaining, an inner world that yet transcends all the idiosyncrasies of the mere individual.

But this inner world does not remain as a kind of separate realm, side by side with our ordinary existence; it professes to be the central and controlling power of all reality. Just as the early Christians, however sorely oppressed in their outward lot, termed themselves, boldly and joyously, the soul of the world, so there runs through the whole of Christianity a longing to give to the world and to life the soul which else they lack. And the only way of giving it is to build up a new kingdom, grounded in the purely inward life, but working with mighty effect in the visible sphere, and meeting Unreason upon its own

ground. Thus we have the formation of the Church in quite another sense than that in which the other religions understand it. It is the inevitable result of this contact with an alien world that the latter should make its power felt, and endless are the complications that result from its debasing influence. Thus the history of the Christian Church is anything rather than a pure and peaceful unfolding of Christian life. Worldliness, with its longing for power, advantage, enjoyment, and the like, has pressed its way in and dimmed the lustre of the ideal. Ever and again Christianity has had to fight not against outer, but rather against inner foes. It has had to struggle to maintain the purity of its truth, the elevation of its own nature. But however much it be defaced and obscured, any one who has regard to the wholeness and inwardness of Christianity will find that the positive element preponderates. More important than all the faults which may characterise its human expression is the fact of the movement towards a new world, the proclamation of a purely inward realm within a world of external connexions, of an eternal truth within the stream of time, of a kingdom of love at the heart of a hard, unheeding world. And with the proclaiming went the attempt at realisation, a struggle the most heroic that our world permits of. There is the shock of conflict not only with human conditions, but with our most immediate conceptions of the world. Victory is impossible without a complete inversion of the whole existing Order. This apparently impossible attempt could only be inspired by the consciousness of thereby ministering to humanity's

pressing need for spiritual self-preservation, and by the sure conviction of a sustaining higher Power. Wherever all this has been duly recognised, there all the defects and failures of our human presentation of the Christian life have been unable to impair its significance, or shake the fact on which it is founded.

He who thus places the essence of a religion in the life that it reveals is not thereby compelled to be indifferent to its thought and the doctrines it proclaims. He will indeed be quick to perceive the danger of so interpreting the emphasis on life as to rob thought and doctrine of their significance, on the ground that life is what matters, not concepts. This latter doctrine confuses subjective life, the mere private being of the individual, with Spiritual Life. The former may be content with a vague feeling that is compatible with very diverse worlds of thought, but the Spiritual Life demands a content, and that this content shall be true, and to this end it must have firm convictions and guiding ideas. But it develops its convictions out of the life-process, instead of building them up in opposition to it. Thus, for religion, only those doctrines are fundamentally significant which immediately express the character of the life-system they represent, and the substance of religious doctrine must be subject to constantly recurring tests, that we may see whether it contains all that is necessary for the development of the particular life in question, and nothing more than is necessary. For anything in excess is an evil, inasmuch as it obscures what is essential, and weakens its force. We have already given it as our conviction that

in view of the far-reaching changes which the Spiritual Life, as manifest to us, has undergone, a thorough testing and sifting now seem to be requisite; but even the keenest perception of the inadequacy of the traditional world of thought should not mislead us as to the necessity of some such systematic thinking. The rejection of intellectualism should never become an attack on the just claim and significance of the function of thought.

But necessary as a thought-world is to religion, its closer elaboration must vary with that stage of the world's work which it interprets. Each different epoch, in so far as it has its own spiritual stamp, must shape the fundamental truth in its own way, and to this end be left entirely free. In all that concerns historical development in time, one age must never become the slave of another. Thus, after the searching changes of the last few centuries, the world of Christian thought stands in need of a thorough reformation. But this cannot be entrusted to the vague reflections of some particular individual; it must proceed from the whole organised life of Christianity. The spiritual actuality that is here at work must supply the standard and measure of all such movements. Otherwise we degrade Christianity to a mere featureless nonentity, an almost negligible quantity. The more we require the fullest freedom of manipulation, the more earnestly do we deprecate the weakening of that which is characteristic in the Christian type and the softening of any of its facts, and the more decisively do we withstand that vague and misty kind of thought so prevalent

to-day, which robs Christianity of all its negating and resisting elements, reducing even its positive statements to the mildest commonplace. The Christian type of life is rich in negations which as yet we are far from being able to dispense with. Its unconditional advocacy of the claims of the Spiritual Life implies the most vigorous repudiation of all naturalism, whether of the crasser or more refined kind, and the championing of freedom in the teeth of all attempts to turn life into a merely natural process. Its conviction of the wide gulf—nay, diametrical opposition—between the condition of the world and the imperative requirements of the Spiritual Life, is in itself a most decisive repudiation of Pantheism with its glorification of the world, and at the same time a repudiation of all those movements, such as Intellectualism, Æstheticism, and so on, which ignore the necessity for an inward change. Finally, its proclamation of a world-wide revolution through spiritual might and redeeming love involves the utter casting-out of all embittered pessimism and despairing scepticism. With its focusing of all its convictions into a Yes or a No, Christianity gives certitude to the whole life, setting the work of thought on a safe path and assigning it a clearly-marked goal. We need have no fear that, by basing our conviction on the actual content of life, we shall be surrendering ourselves to a vague indefiniteness, or shall find that there is too little for us to do.

LIMITATIONS OF CRITICISM

In the brief time still at our disposal we can do no more than touch on a few main points, seeking to show how the greatness and strength of the Christian life tower conspicuous in history, and also how its own achievements confirm its truth. Let us look more closely at the personality of its Founder, at the way in which it has lifted the religious problem into the atmosphere of a common humanity instead of linking it to the particular destiny of a particular people, and lastly at the very real and diverse help it has afforded to every period within which its influence has been felt.

We have already seen that historical criticism has thrown doubt on certain important items in the traditional story of the life of Jesus. The conviction grows upon us that what our accounts transmit to us is not so much the facts themselves as the way in which they were reflected in the ideas and convictions of ensuing generations. Much that once seemed to belong to the Master himself, we now see to have been attributed to him by the reverence of his followers in the light of his subsequent fate. But while we must not fail to recognise the skill with which such criticism can reshape its material, we must also not be blind to its intrinsic limitations : it can elaborate, polish and transpose ; it can register its own hopes and opinions ; but what it can never do is to produce from its own resources some essentially new embodiment of greatness ; it cannot rise to the height of spiritual creation. Thus we may be very uncertain about the precise relation in which Jesus stood to Judaism and the Law, about

the conception he himself formed of his own position and task, about his own view of his future and the future fate of his work. It may be, too, that the gospel-writers have allowed the last scene to work itself too much into the early part of the story, suffusing the whole with its own peculiar colouring. But there is more in their accounts than this, nor are these questions of primary importance for a spiritual Christianity. What the gospels really disclose to us is a quite unique form of spirituality, an unparalleled type of psychical and spiritual life. It is not simply that certain doctrines are preached, or that certain emotional chords are struck. Rather it is this, that we are face to face with a new kind of life and being, in which all diversity is controlled and shaped by one dominating feature, namely, a unique relation to God. Now how are we to explain the rise of this type? Through a mere conjunction of the opinions and sentiments of later generations? As a deposit precipitated from certain mass-movements that can be reckoned up in a purely mechanical manner? We can maintain this view only if by a great thing we mean nothing more than a collection of small things, thereby renouncing our inner unity and sacrificing that which is most characteristic and distinctive in our nature. If then we cannot escape the necessity of postulating something that is primarily great, some single outpouring of creative energy, we must assume, near that which we have hitherto honoured as great though now we dispute its prerogative, the presence of a previously unknown greatness, a hidden star

which reflects its radiance back on to this other secondary orb. But how could such greatness remain hidden, and would it not be a still more puzzling riddle than that which it was intended to solve?

There is, however, another possible solution, which consists not so much in contesting the trustworthiness of the accounts as in denying that they bring forward anything that is plainly original, or that they betoken a complete revolution. It is asserted that the thought-world of Jesus possesses scarcely anything that is wholly new and startling, that historical research is constantly discovering some fresh agreement between his teaching and that of the Greek and Jewish thinkers who lived at the same time or immediately preceding him. The content of his thought, we are told, could only seem new and surprising so long as the error was made of comparing it with that of the older Greece or the older Judaism instead of with the Greek and Jewish thought of his own age.

Such considerations are not unfounded; but whether they are to be allowed to determine our decision is another question. From the point of view they represent, that which is revered as great would be but the mere combination of already existing elements. But how did it chance that this or any other combination was so strong as to produce such effects as were here produced? How could it become the starting-point of a movement so powerful as to lift the world out of its grooves and guide it into new paths?

The problem that meets us here is but the culmination of a larger problem, to wit, how great spiritual productions—or shall we say creations?—are in general related to their environment. The answer to this question depends far less on isolated observations than on our fundamental attitude towards the Spiritual Life. He who does not allow to this Life any independence, but brings it into line with all other processes, will see nothing more than a difference of degree between these great achievements and the average life of every day. But that this failure to recognise the independence of the Spiritual Life implies a renunciation of all truth that transcends human opinion, and delivers man up defenceless to a destructive relativity, we have already convinced ourselves in the course of our previous discussion. He, however, who admits the independence, whose eye is quick to discern the hall-mark of greatness, cannot have any doubt as to the gulf that separates it from the average level of the environment. For it completely reverses the ordinary condition of affairs. What is there a mere appendage to a different order of events is here apprehended and treated as an end in itself. What in ordinary life was always confusedly blent with something else that was alien to it, succeeds here in giving clear and strong expression to its own nature. Whereas there its effectiveness was strictly confined to the point at which it made its appearance, here its stimulating, moulding power is unlimited; from its central position it can transform the whole world of thought, and lift life on to a new level. When then the cold-blooded observer

comes up, and, taking the ideas one by one, industriously ferrets out the proof that it is often, nay, usually possible, to point out, in earlier thinkers, utterances that recall or even coincide with these ideas, does this make any difference to the main fact? Does not the apparent *rapprochement* itself show up more fully than ever before the superlative quality of greatness, the distinctive character of the synthesis it effects, the unique stamp that it impresses on everything, giving significance even to the smallest details, the driving-force with which it vitalises the whole inert environment? We can point to many of the Kantian ideas as already familiar to the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, but, despite the outward approximation, how remote they are in this setting from the inward meaning of Kant! And how different is the effectiveness of single ideas according as they work side by side with others, or become the moving and controlling power of a whole system! Twelve hundred years before Descartes, Augustine had already conceived the idea that the individual's certainty as to the existence of his own Ego was the starting-point of all certainty, but with Augustine this was simply a sporadic suggestion; with Descartes it introduces a revolution in philosophy, and not only in philosophy, but in the whole method and manner of thought and life. It is the amount of spiritual force put into the ideas that makes the difference.

And what is true for all departments of spiritual activity is true in a very special way for religion. For whenever religion is taken in the

strict and genuine sense which its true nature demands, it finds itself diverging widely from the average life, nay, directly contradicting it. The unseen world is for this life a remote realm only deducible by a toilsome process of inference, yet it can never be truly real to man unless it be immediately present and in the closest possible relation to him. The average man regards it as a mere means to human ends, such as the advancement of our personal happiness, the power to rule our fellows and so on; yet it is always mere shadow and illusion unless it succeeds in winning our interest for goods which have a quite different scale of value, goods which may be directly harmful to our merely human well-being. Thus it is always a great and marvellous achievement when any one succeeds in bringing this conversion about, in making the invisible world credible, convincing, constraining to man, giving it such overwhelming simplicity and nearness that he finds in it his truest nature, and can live and die for it. It is only an individual here and there who has effected such a change. What to others was faintly outlined by longing and reflection became to such an one the surest of all realities; thus he and he alone could prepare new paths for the community as a whole. That Jesus did so work for Christianity, that he made the impossible possible, real and necessary, is beyond all doubt. The closer specification of the basis on which we conceive this work to have rested is here uncalled for. We may refer the reader to our discussion of it in the "Problem of Human Life." Here we are concerned with the life and being of Jesus only as it

furnishes a convincing practical proof of the truth and power of the Christian life. It is our study of him that enables us to understand how peculiarly fitted this life is to produce personalities in the highest sense of the term, personalities that are self-reliant and can overcome the world, while at the same time they are borne up by the living presence of an inner world, and thus securely kept from presumptuous pride.

To proceed to the second point. Historical Christianity shows a capacity far exceeding that of any other religion for detaching the religious problem from its setting in the life of one particular nationality; and this, not in the interest of an abstract humanity after the fashion of the Enlightenment, but in the service of a universal spiritual principle and method which can turn the idiosyncrasies of the different nations to the noblest uses, and, from the vantage-ground of a higher standpoint, strives to bring this diversity together, and find some way of adjusting the different claims. Consequently Christianity, more than any other religion, seems to be the concern and product of the whole of humanity rather than of one particular part of it. Even those of the other religions which do make their appeal to the whole of humanity, and not merely to one special nation, are yet far more influenced by the national peculiarities of the people with whom they originated; and even when they extend their borders they still retain the typical features of their own

original habitat. It is scarcely possible to forget the Indian origin of Buddhism, the Arabian origin of Mohammedanism. Christianity, on the other hand, so far as the main branch of it is concerned, was soon transplanted from its Jewish home to Greek and then to Roman soil. Thus from a very early date it had absorbed both Semitic and Indogermanic traits—traits which embody certain distinct fundamental tendencies of human life and aspiration. The Semitic type is characterised by strenuous concentration along one particular line. Its development centred round the moral problem and the stern demands of the moral law. It was really the moral imperative which, in a religious setting, assumed ascendancy over all other requirements, and reduced them all to a position of little moment. On the Indogermanic side, as represented mainly by the Greeks in opposition to Christianity, the expansive impulse was much more strongly felt. The Greeks were occupied in the objective task of building up a realm of culture and exploring impartially all the possibilities of human nature. The fusion of these two tendencies in Christianity gave rise to much tension and many complications. It has often happened that the two currents have crossed and obstructed each other. But the dual influence has been, notwithstanding, a great stimulus to the Christian life. The inclusion of these opposites, which seem to shun each other, but in the end must seek each other, gave it a breadth and nobility hitherto unknown. We cannot then accuse Christianity of being untrue to its own nature when it absorbed and assimilated

the Greek spirit, and especially Greek science and Greek art. The only doubtful point lay in the fact that it often absorbed these influences indiscriminately, without sufficiently testing them by reference to its own fundamental principles, and so effecting a proper adjustment; it did not understand how to give full expression to its own individuality as opposed to the foreign elements it was assimilating. But never can we contend that it should have avoided these wider problems altogether, and never can we make it our duty to weed out these elements of culture as products of degeneration, and bring Christianity back to its pristine state, which, moreover, can never be restored. Should we attempt any such change as this, we should only endanger the universal character of Christianity, and, in the true spirit of sectarianism, turn it into a support and comfort for the mere individual.

How deeply this racial contrast has made itself felt in the sphere of religion, how important are the problems which arise from the merging of these various tendencies, is shown very strikingly in the manner of conceiving the Godhead. The Semites conceive of the Divine mainly in opposition to the world—as the Sublime, the Unapproachable Being Who commands our reverence. Here there is no familiar nearness. Even the Divine name must be used with the utmost caution. Any immediate contact of human and Divine is far indeed from Semitic thought. The transcendent view of religion was here decidedly predominant. The Indogermanic peoples, on the contrary, bring the Divine into the closest

possible connexion with the world; they view it as belonging to the world and inseparable from it. There is only one world, including both the Divine and that which is outside it. Thus the primary religious task is to bring human and Divine into closest possible relation. Greek and Hindu alike do not hesitate to represent the Divine as clothing itself in human form and holding converse with man. A higher stage of this same unifying movement is seen in mysticism, which finds its home on Indogermanic soil. Here it is the immanental tendency that is dominant. Christianity has absorbed both tendencies, the transcendental and the immanental: on the one hand, it has exalted the Divine high above the world, stoutly withstanding as derogatory to the Divine dignity any attempt to lower it by blending it with the human. The struggles of the early centuries illustrate this attitude very clearly. But, on the other hand, Christianity has actually permitted this world-transcending Divinity to enter the world in all the fulness of its nature, and, through love and grace, has made it one with man's own being. The double movement is undoubtedly fraught with grave dangers; and convictions that can be true and forceful only when springing from a free, spontaneous life have often been frozen into dogmatic formulas. But yet, the realisation of the contrast, the fact that the Divine, immeasurable and transcendent as it was, could be at the same time the most intimate and personal factor in our experience, gave rise to a movement of exhaustless promise. It made all life dynamic, and the whole framework of reality in the light of this

context is seen to rest on the twin pillars of Freedom and Personal Deed.

The rise to independence of the Germanic race towards the close of the Middle Ages forced Christianity to face a yet wider problem. So far, it had had to deal with mature or even senescent civilisations; but now a new type began to press its claim, a people in all the freshness of its early youth, whose spiritual individuality was becoming ever more definitely marked; a people, moreover, presenting many points of superiority: greater depth and tenderness of feeling, more truth and inwardness in the soul's relation to God, a stronger desire for a freer individual development, a boundless seriousness of personal conviction. With the fusion of all these qualities to form a general type, claiming an independent existence, it became impossible to avoid serious struggles with the older Order, whose true greatness lay in its organising power, whether applied to the life of the community or to the universe of thought. These struggles have ended by destroying for an indefinite period ahead the outward unity of the Church, and they still stir up passionate feeling. In the end, however, Christianity still exists as a whole, despite all schisms, and the whole even reaps the advantage of what, from the point of view of the part, must be reckoned as a loss. For what is it that makes Christianity before all else a religion for the whole of mankind? Is it not its power to attract to itself the diverse aspirations of different races and nations, and focus them all upon one common task? In this way due recognition is given to the spiritual individuality of

each, though not without purifying and transforming it. Thus the whole is raised to an essentially higher level, and Freedom triumphs over all that is merely natural.

He who views this superiority to all merely racial distinctions as a special mark of greatness in Christianity must decisively reject all modern attempts to connect Christianity closely with a particular race, and to value it as the highest expression of the idiosyncrasy of this race. It should be clear, in the light of what we have said, that such attempts must tend to distort the truth and to degrade the spiritual to the level of the natural. The natural disposition has value even for religion, a value given it by spiritual work; but only in so far as the latter succeeds in transplanting it to the soil of freedom and inwardly uplifting it. Let all rejoice that Christianity treats religion as the common concern of all mankind, and let us not seek to draw it away from this lofty standpoint, which was only too hardly won, and will ever have to be contended for anew.

The same universality that Christianity displays in regard to different races and nationalities is also shown in its attitude towards different epochs, and in the influence it exerts on them. To each of these epochs it has made its specific contribution, and it has ministered to the most vital aspirations of each one of them. Nor were the gains which it helped to win all expended at the time: they still affect us as a permanent problem and incentive.

Thus history, in this light, does not present itself as a succession of different phases, one displacing the other, but rather as a revelation of tendencies and truths which are simultaneously compatible, and, taken together, form a present that does not vanish with the passing moment. On this view, history is no mere past.

The Christianity of the first centuries gave firm support and inner coherence to a decadent and perishing humanity. It found a race grown dull and weary, and wakened it to fresh zest in life; it opened up to it new problems, filled it with new hopes and even with a proud consciousness of its own destiny. In the great Deluge that swept mankind, Religion became the sheltering ark, and, like the rainbow in the old tale, the Cross now became the sign of conciliation to a distressed humanity. The Middle Ages saw the rise of new nations and the growth of a new humanity. Life assumed an educational aspect that was often strict and harsh; the preservation of an inviolable order outweighed in importance all other aims. Even the thought-world was stably organised: under the guidance of religion all departments of life were knit together into a single whole. This dispensation strikes us to-day as too rigid and narrow, and the direct suzerainty exercised by religion was to no one more harmful than to religion itself. But resist as we may the mediæval solution, we ought not to blind ourselves to the fact that it not only corresponded to the needs of its own day, but that, in systematising the various departments of life and effecting the organisation of humanity, it was engaged in a problem of

abiding significance, a problem which has special value for us, in view of the growing disintegration of spiritual life in our midst. It is worth noting that this is the precise problem which leading thinkers of the nineteenth century—men like Hegel and Comte—have again brought into the foreground. Towards the close of the Middle Ages a longing for the complete independence of the inward life began to play a dominant part. It did not confine itself to religion, and was, indeed, often hostile to it, but even within the limits of Christianity it met with response to its appeal. In the Reformation it gave a strong impetus to the Christian life, indirectly affecting also the older Church, and detaching from it in spirit even those whose outward allegiance to the mediæval thought-world remained unshaken. Still more throughout the modern period has Christianity become a personal religion instead of an ecclesiastical order. The idea of personality itself, however, has been deepened and consecrated through religion, as it hardly could have been in any other way.

The main tendency of our own age, with its steadily growing spirit of independence, has come into ever sharper conflict with Christianity. That it had a stronger vitality and made existence more dependent on man's own activity, would not necessarily have conduced to this result. The irreparable breach was due to the fact that for modern thought the activity and the positive trend of life were conceived as man's own immediate work, as the outcome of his own natural strength, whereas Christianity regarded them as

emanating from man's relation to God through an inward renewal of his being: its affirmation of life is not direct, but is only reached through negation and inward change. We must beware of weakening in any way this opposition between the Christian and the modern points of view—an opposition so strong as absolutely to preclude any prospect of easy reconciliation. Certain though it may be that the final synthesis of life will somehow transcend it, the first condition for this consummation is the frank recognition of the problem, the rejection of every attempt to belittle it or cover it up. But even amid the conflict Christianity has substantially helped the Modern World: over against the eager anxiety to be busy and prosperous, it has revealed an untroubled depth of life. It has confronted our easy optimism and enthusiasm for culture with a reminder of the limitations and complications of human existence; in addition it has steadfastly resisted the secularisation of life, the tendency to lapse into a worldly and ephemeral culture. It is no mere disposition to condone existing arrangements that has made almost all great modern thinkers, while reserving to themselves complete independence of conviction, try to find some positive relation with Christianity, seeking it, for the most part, in the most vital part of their system. Thus even in opposing modern thought, Christianity has not ceased to exert on it an important influence.

Still, an opposition rooted so deep in the nature of life, and drawing it in contrary directions, could not possibly continue for ever;

tendencies in our human environment, which at the outset may be fairly compatible, are driven in the end, by the sheer necessities of the case, into ever sharper cleavage. The more conscious we become of it, the more do all the considerations which are adverse to the distinctively Christian type gain in effectiveness. Christianity finds herself at a crisis which is deeper-reaching and more dangerous than any she has faced before in the whole course of her history. For it is not this or that element of her composition that is called in question, but the whole structure of her life and being.

It is not a single line of attack, but the simultaneous approach along different lines that makes the whole situation so tense and dramatic. We have already seen that since the time when the ecclesiastical form of Christianity was finally fixed, the profoundest changes have taken place alike in the world and the prevailing temper of life. But Christianity is far from having come conclusively to terms with these changes, far from having raised above their ebb and flow the imperishable truth that is in her. The present form of Christianity often presents this truth in the sorriest guise, so that it may even seem to be obstructive and out of sympathy with that temporal phase of the Spiritual Life that is even now unfolding. The situation, moreover, is complicated by the fact that problems such as these do not admit of being put aside as though they were the mere product of man's arbitrary caprice.

But it is not so much the actual substance of these changes which makes them dangerous to

the vital truth of religion. It is rather the whole modern tendency that is bound up with them, and indeed so closely that it is often impossible to say where the one ends and the other begins. We refer here to the immanental way of thinking which does not recognise any fundamental contradictions in our world of Reality, and believes that within the sphere of our own life it can find a solution for all the problems that may present themselves. This way of thinking is absolutely incompatible with a religion such as Christianity; not only must it break up and destroy religion in its historical forms, it must even abolish all need for religion. But it is precisely this mode of thought which has been asserting itself more and more strongly through our whole modern period: the main phases in its development coincide with the main steps in the inner movement of the modern world. The Renaissance held firm by the mediæval belief in the transcendence of God, but it differed from mediævalism in that it sought to establish a closer connexion between the Divine transcendence and the world of immediate reality which was thereby to gain fresh lustre and glory. The Pantheism of the following centuries drew the Divine right down into the world, and sought to blend the two into an inseparable unity. Finally the Positivism and Agnosticism of the nineteenth century claimed all man's strength and interest for his immediate existence in nature and society, and relegated the world of Faith to an unknown Beyond, degrading it even to a mere tissue of illusions. Thus as the movement has developed, religion has grown more and more dim,

till at last it would seem to have vanished altogether.

All this, bolstered up by the feeling of an age that is eminently self-conscious, is dangerous enough to religion. But its directly unsettling effect to-day is due largely to its alliance with the social movements and displacements of the time. These social upheavals are unearthing the lower layers that form the broad basis of society, and bringing them to the surface. The masses are being called on to judge for themselves concerning the ultimate questions of life and the world. But for the most part they have not been very vitally affected either by religion or by any other form of spiritual activity; they are inclined to think that religion represents the interest, not of mankind, but of certain privileged classes. They know nothing of those mighty, soul-stirring movements of history when men of all classes hungered and thirsted after religion. Moreover, in their growing consciousness of power and their increasingly clear perception of their own goal, they incline to an immediate affirmation of the good of life that is in direct contradiction to religion. Is it any wonder if the spirit of denial is here victorious, and that this current of human life should deem religion a mere survival from bygone and forgotten times?

All this puts the cause of religion, as regards its whole present position among mankind, on a highly unfavourable footing. If the ultimate decision depended on its position here, the cause might well seem doomed. He, however, who agrees with us in acknowledging an independence of the

Spiritual Life, and measures all man's effort and opinion in the light of it, cannot yield himself uncritically to even the strongest wave of popular feeling. He will be obliged to test its claims and its limits by reference to what is permanent in the Spiritual Life, and by appealing to the fundamental relation of man to reality. Here we are greeted with such far-reaching complications that the anti-religious tendencies of the last centuries can only be regarded as a passing episode. Whoever recognises in the Spiritual Life the revelation of a new stage of Reality, and at the same time fathoms the extent of the gulf, the sharpness of the contrast, between the average condition of humanity and that which the Spiritual Life requires of it, will either yield completely to the forces of denial and negation, or will come back again and yet again to religion. The same is true of humanity as a whole, and we may legitimately expect that the more pronounced and deliberate is the tendency to give life a positive value on purely natural grounds without going beyond man's own resources, the stronger and more sincere will be the recognition of the limitations of all that is merely natural, and the longing to be caught up into the sweep of a wider life. So far as the tendencies of the age have no objective truth behind them, they live themselves out and easily veer round to the opposite point of the compass. Thus in regard to the religious problem, also, we can trust quietly to the inner necessities of man's nature.

But we do not need to put our hope solely in the future. Even in our own day there is growing

evidence to show that a new temper and aspiration are gaining ground. It is true that to all appearance the current still runs hard against religion, but it becomes increasingly clear that this current does not embrace man's whole existence, and that it is, indeed, being directly counteracted by an undercurrent of a totally different kind. In the fundamental relation of man to the world, in the fundamental emotions of life, there are quasi-molecular changes at work which are undermining the present position and preparing the way for drastic alterations in our whole existing order. Outwardly imperceptible as such movements are, they are yet the strongest force in our existence. It is they that are determining the ends that shall control life's effort, the standards from which all experience will take its value. They are the source of a far more original and spontaneous energy than all worldly views and society aims can produce; for that which is here at stake is nothing less than the very heart of our being, our chance of winning a true life, the question of a spiritual To be or not to be. It was on the reef of such inwardch anges that the splendid civilisations of olden time were wrecked; and should our modern civilisation defy them, there cannot be the slightest doubt as to who will conquer.

But such changes are unmistakably in progress, and they are gaining strength visibly. In the first place, the experiences of the nineteenth century make us much more keenly conscious than were the epochs immediately preceding it of the resistance we meet with in life, the com-

plications of our human lot, the inner contradictions of our nature. There is more room for the negative element, and it exercises a far wider influence on our conception and valuation of life. Even this is sufficient to give quite another colouring to the conflict waged by religion against sorrow and guilt. But this darker view of existence would not necessarily have produced an inner revolution if only our ultimate goals had stood intact, and a Reason at the heart of things had remained unquestioned. An additional emphasis on the No matters little, provided that the Yes still maintains its ascendency. But this is no longer the case to-day. We have become uncertain of our main bearings; we have seen complications that throw doubt on all our gains springing from the very ends that we were pursuing with so much fervour. Our ideals themselves are tottering to the fall. It was with zest and gladness that we flung ourselves into work, but the work gripped and held us fast and threatened to make us into its mere tools. In this unresting output of energy, our spiritual immediacy disappeared little by little, and with it the significance of life. We freed man from all tutelage without and within: we thought we were giving him an unimagined greatness. But the freedom spelt only severance from all the inward connexions of Reality, and man, thus set upon his own feet, though outwardly more imposing, was inwardly small and shrunken. So small is he, so crying is the disproportion between the problems of the age and his capacity to solve them, that many minds are looking with anxious longing for

something that will lift him to a higher level. But how can this longing be satisfied, unless by linking him to what is deepest and most ultimate in the universe? Endless is the toil and trouble we have spent on the means of life, on the improvement of outward conditions. We have achieved much, but not that which we hoped—a spiritual uplifting of man, his greater happiness. Rather have our cares and conflicts led us more and more into an atmosphere of unrest and passion. In particular, the growing difficulty of the struggle for livelihood has brought home to us with greater force the lack of any clearly-marked aims in life. We toil and hurry ourselves breathless in order to maintain life, but is the life worth so much toil and labour?—When all these special problems finally fuse together into one, their combined force lends them a resistless weight; we find that we are uncertain about the whole meaning of life: we feel, as strongly as it was ever felt, the problematic character of human existence. Clearly as modern science shows us our connexion with nature, we yet hesitate to trust ourselves wholly to this connexion, since it would involve a giving-up of all distinctively human goods and values. So we hold fast to a something that is More than Nature, but what does this More consist in? On what is it based? What does it give man to do? Brilliant as are the outward triumphs of civilisation, we yet find ourselves in the most painful perplexity when we come to deal with these questions of our life and being. We hesitate to look them straight in the face; we evade them as much as we possibly can; yet, do what we will,

in the end the inward poverty shows through all the outward splendour, and we come to recognise it as our own intimate concern.

Thus it is not merely a religious crisis, it is a crisis of our whole life with which we are faced to-day, and this fact puts the religious struggle in a far more favourable position than it would otherwise occupy. For nothing was more dangerous to religion than to suppose that it was possible to have a culture of a spiritual kind, full of faith in the ideal, without any help from religion herself, and even in opposition to her influence. It was particularly this that made religion seem secondary and superfluous, something that could be removed without hurt to any one. When now we see that the weakening of religion is only the culminating point of a process in which the Spiritual Life generally is being weakened, that the fight centres round ultimate principles, and concerns not the part but the whole, the whole life is roused to action; man is thrown back on the ultimate foundations of his existence, and we may legitimately expect that if life ever again finds stable anchorage, it will be all to the advantage of religion, and will result in developments that we cannot now foresee.

Hard as this struggle is, and great as is its call on our activities, yet, in one important point, religion is more favourably situated to-day than in earlier times. Those palliative world-views which obscured the great opposition of life, which desired to maintain in appearance what they denied in principle, are becoming less and less convincing. People used to believe in an Absolute Moral Order,

an independent inward world, a world-embracing personality, and so on, without being able to assert any presence of a higher Order within the human sphere. To-day, however, such conceptions are involved in the general doubt and upheaval. It becomes convincingly clear that the great Either-Or admits of no third alternative, and that the conflict concerns not this or that particular feature of our existence, but the rationality of the whole of it.

That it is a need of the whole life which urges us to grapple again with the religious problem is in itself an indication of the method we should pursue in treating it. When religion has to rise anew from the ruins of a life that has suffered shock and change, it must plant itself upon the new ground with complete abandonment of prejudice, and even that which is eternal in its nature must assume a new form corresponding to the new conditions. Thus we discard all anxious apologetics, which concentrate their sagacity on the endeavour to leave a loophole for mere possibilities and take a peculiar pleasure in showing up the defects and failures of modern movements. We discard, moreover, any form of religion which contents itself with affording a passable support and comfort to mere individuals, and timidly evades the questions that concern civilisation as a whole, and the collective Spiritual Life. Religion can become a power again only by attacking these questions with courage and zest. For man as a spiritual being is no mere individual; as a personality his goal is the Infinite, and his being is shaped by the whole content of

Reality. Thus he who fights to win back for religion her force and power, should fight at the same time for a regenerated religion, a Christianity that is active and progressive in type, broad, free, and great. Religion must be fully compensated for the loss of those external props and aids that have gone beyond recall. And such compensation is to be found only through a forceful deepening of the problem: in life itself and its inward relationships which we are wont to accept as a matter of course, there are great facts to be discovered and made fruitful and effective.

It is with such considerations in mind that we have undertaken the foregoing inquiry. We have contended that a religion of the Spiritual Life should be more clearly distinguished from that of the natural man, and we have sought to promote the zealous expulsion of all those frivolous accessories which lower the status of religion, and, in last resort, imperil her truth. While anxious to do full justice to the historical forms of religion, we have sought to ascertain whether they were based on eternal truth, and thus have opposed any mingling of temporal and eternal, any blind subjection to the merely temporal element. We have insisted on the need of emphasising the value of the new life, and grasping its significance firmly in opposition to the enslavement of religion to outward forms and formulas, and also to all such influences as tend to tone down the characteristic features, and thin away the content.

In the problems that here face us, the subject-matter is so difficult, the resistance of man so stubborn, that a review of the whole situation

might easily tend to daunt us. But we have not here to do with a task that concerns our unaided human nature, but with an inner necessity of the Spiritual Life. With regard to such a necessity, and to religion in particular, these words hold good: "Either religion is merely a product of human wishes and ideas under the sanction of tradition and social convention—and then neither art nor might nor cunning can prevent so frail a fabrication from being whelmed by the advancing spiritual tide—or else religion is based on facts of a supra-human order, and in that case the most violent onslaught cannot shake her; rather will it help her in the end, through all the stress and toil of human circumstance, to discover where her true strength lies, and to express in purer ways the eternal truth that is in her" ("The Truth of Religion").

IV

THE CONFLICT OVER CHRISTIANITY TO-DAY

I. THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

IT is now universally admitted that the Modern World, and the present time in particular, finds itself at many points in contradiction with Christianity; but the true extent of the opposition and the uncompromising character of the attack are still very far from being generally understood. We do not sufficiently realise that ultimate foundations are being threatened and underlying assumptions shaken; that not only is there an assault upon the doctrines of Christianity, but that even the very questions to which these doctrines are the answer, the very problems of which they are the solution, tend already to appear strange and unintelligible to the thought of to-day. And yet, if we are to cope effectively with the situation, it is imperative that we should realise how the matter truly stands. Once our eyes are opened, we shall see that no minor defences can save us; we shall cease to expect decisive results from the adoption of sectarian programmes, however conscientiously the schemes are carried out. For we

shall then know that what is at stake is not the primacy of this point over that, or the superiority of one shade of Christianity over another, but the very existence of Christianity as a whole. This is the central issue, and we hope to draw out its main implications. But, in so doing, we must beware of overlooking either the changes that have actually taken place in the conditions of human life or the accentuating, intensifying effect exercised upon these changes by the subjective tendencies of men, their inclinations and opinions. The heat and passion of the conflict is due very largely to the confusions and entanglements which mark the interaction of these two factors.

We have already characterised Christianity as the religion of moral redemption, which, through the mediation of a unique personality, aims at establishing a new relation between man and God, and in the development of this relation would produce a new order of life of which the Church is the visible embodiment. This view of Christianity states and represents certain distinctive convictions which our modern life is finding increasingly uncongenial. The mere fact that under the Christian dispensation religion ruled supreme, and suffered no other interest to assert against it an independent value of its own, was in itself a challenge to the modern world. For, from its first appearing, the new spirit has been heralding a universal order of life in which every sphere of labour is to find its just place and recognition. It is quite true that, within a dispensation such as this, embracing all man's powers

and all his varied interests, finding for every particular faculty its function within the whole, there is room for religion as for all else, but it is clear that the rôle and significance of religion are fundamentally affected by the summons to prove its pretensions and share with other powers the sovereignty of life. The problems and difficulties thereby created became more crucial as life assumed a character more distinctively modern. Modern life does not feel the deep need of religion, the need for a new world. That which drives men to religion is the break with the world of their experience, the failure to find satisfaction in what this world offers or is able to offer. But there is no such discord to-day between man and his world. Through research into nature and the technical mastery over her resources; through co-operation in political, national, and social work; through the initiation into a world-wide movement with its inexhaustible programme and limitless prospects, the modern world has so enriched itself, holds out such promise for man's happiness, engrosses his whole interest so unremittingly, and shows such development of internal cohesion, that the invisible world which, in days gone by, was wont to draw to itself the yearnings and strivings of man's soul has been fading more and more into the background, and, if not banished altogether, has receded to an inaccessible distance. Where the main passion of life is concentrated as it is to-day upon the task of transforming existence as we find it into a rational order, it is inevitable that religion should thus recede into the background. Ultimately we

find that even the possibility of religion is fiercely disputed, and the religious life repudiated and explained away as mere illusion and untenable anthropomorphism. Again, it is a presupposition of all deeper religious experience that that which transpires in the inner life constitutes the very core of reality; thus religion exalts man above his environment, and is even inclined to treat him as the central fact of the universe. But the main trend of modern life and of modern science in particular has been strenuously opposed to admitting man's right to this central position, and seeks to display him as a mere link in the vast machinery of nature. The theory of evolution, more especially, presents man as most intimately related to other forms of life, and subject, even in the movements of his soul, to unchangeable natural conditions which determine the path he must follow. Even the littleness of the earth amid the immeasurable spaces of the universe, and the insignificance of the age of the human race when compared with the immense formation-periods of planets and of stars, have the effect of still further diminishing the importance of man. There he stands in all his particularity and finitude, amid countless others as specific and finite as himself. How is it possible that the experiences of such a being should be the pivot of the world's movement? How can the ideas of such a creature help to give any conception of the ultimate grounds and creative forces of the universe? From this point of view the world of religion seems no better than a realm of mere wishes and dreams, and the help it promises to give us a mere illusion.

But that which possesses no truth in itself cannot yield us true service; its empty prophesyings must, in the end, prove most disastrous to human life.

As a religion of moral redemption Christianity made moral conduct central for life, and enriched it with peculiar warmth and intimacy. For it interpreted it as a personal and social relationship, in harmony or disharmony with the holy will of the Godhead who governs the world from above. Thus quickened and deepened, the moral problem appeared to determine the fate of the universe, and moral considerations to decide on the worth of a soul. The whole force of life was concentrated in an ethical direction. Now, on the other hand, there arises from many quarters a counter-cry of protest and opposition. The keener insight of the New Age, and a more accurate acquaintance with the laws which govern alike our human life and Nature, make it quite clear that neither in the way of love nor in that of justice does Reality endorse our ethical demands. Nature's indifference to man's welfare is appalling, yet unmistakable; and it is becoming increasingly plain that every attempt to shape our human world into a kingdom of justice and of love proves lamentably inadequate, and meets with restrictions at every turn. Moreover, is not the ethical impulse but one amongst others, and does not its claim to lord it over the rest involve grave perils and inconveniences? Are not Art and Science contracted, nay, disfigured, when that alone in them has value which serves a moral purpose? Nay more, our whole life seems vague and unreal when the disposition and

nothing else counts; when it is a matter of little, or of secondary, importance whether we do or do not accomplish the thing which we approve. The conduct of life becomes really significant for the man of to-day only as it passes into working-contact with the environment; the inner experiences of the soul itself are of relatively small consequence.

The distinctive quality of Christian morals tends to strengthen such misgiving. Grounded as these are in the intimacies of personal intercourse, they exhort above all to meekness and benevolence, to the charity that bears, suffers, and forgives. But, we ask, is a morality of this kind strong enough to cope with the problems of human life? Is it not too soft and yielding, seeing that life itself is so heavy and so hard? Does not the repelling of evil and the repressing of what is unworthy call for something more vigorous and more virile, for the strength that does not shrink from being severe? Above all, is there any principle more ultimate than that of Justice in the establishing of a social order? In public life, as a matter of fact, this sterner quality had always been to the fore; no state could ever have maintained itself on a policy of mere love and surrender. But if this is so, the adoption of the Christian standard brings a duality into our life that may easily betray us into insincerity.

But over and beyond such questionings as these lay a criticism still more radical. The most fundamental conviction of all, the idea that our freedom was governed by the requirements of duty, and destined to serve ends undictated by our

finite interests, was relentlessly challenged. Just as in Nature we find a prevailing struggle for existence, so in our human sphere also it would appear that merciless competition is the most effective means for promoting the best use of our powers, and assuring the progress of the community. But this view of the progress of life implies the degradation of all ethical values: meekness is just weakness, and weakness the way to the wall. The endeavour, as exemplified by the school of subjective æstheticists, to provide for the artistic impulses of the natural man the means for refined self-indulgence leads, on very similar lines, to the deprecation of morality as an influence that cramps the expression of individuality and encourages a uniform behaviour. Æstheticism and Naturalism, however different in other ways, are yet united in their common opposition to morality. And so it has come to pass that Morality, once triumphant, has been swept from its dictatorship by the force of the modern current and compelled to take up a defensive attitude. Nothing is more calculated to undermine the Christian presentation of life than this intellectual blindness for that which Christianity held to be the motive-force of all reality.

As a religion of moral redemption, Christianity was pledged to the conviction that a deep ethical rift ran through man's nature, a rift which no power of his, stretched though it were to the utmost, could ever hope to close. In opposition to this view the modern world is asking whether this low valuation of man's powers, this refusal to recognise his moral endowment, does more than

express the conviction of a particular age, of an age made timid through misery and oppression; or whether it is perhaps the characteristic confession of a certain type of mind, prone to pass sharply from one experience to its opposite, yet unable by its own power to weld these into a unity. Inspired by an overweening sense of power, conscious that its own labour, ceaseless in its progress, is transforming the face of the world, the New Age does not feel the need of salvation; it is therefore unable to enter into the atmosphere, or understand the soul-shattering experiences of these earlier times, and is in danger of persuading itself that the idea of redemption is a meaningless illusion.

The decisive act of redemption was identified by Christianity with the entry of God into human life, with the at-one-ment of the human and Divine natures. But Christianity held that this union was consummated in one instance only, namely, in the personality of Christ, and that such fulness of life as proceeded from the union could be communicated to all from this one source alone. But it was above all through His vicarious sufferings, through His self-sacrificing love that the God-man became the mediator between God and humanity. It would not be easy to deny the greatness of the service rendered by this line of thought in the spiritualising of life and the deepening of feeling; but the dogmatic setting is becoming increasingly difficult to defend: it is revealing itself more and more clearly as the expression of an anthropomorphic, sense-fettered way of thinking which we cannot any longer

tolerate. Impressed as is the modern mind with the immensity of the universe and the littleness of man, it finds it unthinkable that one and the same personality should be at once God and man, "very God" and "very man"; nor can it understand how anyone's guilt can be removed by anything which another can do for him. The very idea of a mediator is repugnant to it, since it is unable to see why the soul should not commune directly with the Godhead. The idea of mediation exercised an overwhelming compulsion over an age which, in despairing of the present world, believed that the Divine could not be too sharply distinguished from it, nor exalted far enough above it. There was then no approach to the Godhead available for man apart from the help of mediating powers which, in last resort, summed themselves up in the transcendent personality who was at once God and man. But the whole endeavour of the modern age is to emphasise the intimacy between God and the world, and bring both within a single scheme of Reality. How then, with the Divine nature and life so intimately present, could any form of mediation seem necessary? And how could a Divinity, within whose depth rests the whole of Reality, reveal on one particular occasion alone the fulness of his being? Moreover, the improved scientific methods of today are detecting in the traditional doctrine of redemption the meeting-point of many different lines of thought which are indeed closely interwoven, but by no means harmoniously adjusted. There is Anthropomorphism on the one side, and on the other Mysticism and Speculative

Theology; to the former the doctrine owes its warm, emotional appeal, to the latter the breadth and depth of its spiritual insight. But what is lacking is the vital union of these two tendencies, the moral and the metaphysical, as we might perhaps call them. There remains a persistent dualism which infects with its own discord all the main ideas.

It was the aim of Christianity not only to help the individual, but to inaugurate a social régime animated by the Divine spirit and incorporated in the Church. On these premisses there could be no disputing the unique pre-eminence of the Church, or its right to control all the relations of the social order. So high as the Divine was exalted above the human, so high was the Church raised above all the institutions of man. But the modern world has developed a civilisation of a secular kind, and incorporated it firmly in the modern State. Thus the Church finds itself faced by a grave dilemma. If she maintains unaltered her ancient claims, she is driven into ever sharper antagonism with the modern world and the modern State; if, on the other hand, she renounces these claims, Christianity becomes increasingly a concern of the mere individual; there ceases to be any distinctively Christian sphere of life, and the secular view and treatment of things threatens entirely to supersede the religious dispensation. It is true that religion would then cease to be a source of disturbance and unrest, but it could accomplish very little, and might, without much loss to anyone, vanish out of human life.

So deep-reaching, so unsettling a criticism of all the main tenets of the Christian Faith, was bound in the long run to deter men from any sort of adhesion to Christianity. And as decade after decade has passed, this alienation of sympathy has become more and more marked. At first it was a few particularly crude doctrines which awakened incredulity and opposition; but, as time wore on, the whole structure of Christianity was drawn down into the arena. At the outset the spirit of criticism and negation was confined within narrow limits, the great mass of the people remaining unaffected in its beliefs. But this state of things has been gradually changing, and from the great cities more especially a passionate wave of denial is spreading further and further into the life of the people. We need only look at France to convince ourselves that it is no impossible thing that the major part of a people should fall away from the Christianity of the Church. Now in considering these questions we should always bear in mind that, from the point of view of immediate experience, the religious outlook is far from appearing the most obvious and ready to hand. A historical religion, as in the special case of Christianity, has been tested by long experience, and passed through the stress and the shock of conflict. The desire for spiritual self-preservation impelled it to break with the world about it, and to set up in opposition to it a spiritual synthesis implying its own distinctive type of social life. The world of religion thus became man's central concern. It provided a point of view from which the whole of Reality appeared in

a characteristic light. In the atmosphere of religious conviction the riddles of existence, though they remained unsolved, were yet softened into a mystery that could be borne. Religion could answer the importunate questions which torment man's soul so as to inspire the faithful, at least, with complete conviction. Above all, man found in religion an antidote to the evils that preyed upon his life and threatened to rob it of all its meaning. But when this synthesis breaks up, and the spiritual atmosphere sympathetic to it is dissipated, the chill and gloomy first impressions of reality reassert themselves unchecked; the riddles of existence exert their full pressure once more; what used to seem obvious becomes again problematic, and all unsolved enigmas rise up in protest and accuse religion.

Now as the spirit of denial, re-awakened, becomes more and more insistent, it is easy to see that it must pass over into plain rejection and even into impassioned anger. For in questions of this kind no middle course is possible, and there is no room for amiable compromise. If the religious synthesis is effected only at the cost of truth, if it distorts and falsifies the deepest issues of life, it becomes quite impossible to tolerate it any longer, and to attack it without mercy becomes at once an urgent duty, and the condition of a sincere and healthy life. The manner in which the attack has been made may have been not infrequently far from tactful, but we cannot blame these adversaries of the Christian faith for the strength of their feeling in the matter. It befits the importance of the issue more

truly than does the lukewarm temper of the moderate.

But there is one aspect of the modern movement that is indeed astonishingly perverse—and we come across it pretty often nowadays—I refer to a way of thinking kin to that of the Enlightenment, which rejects Christianity and all that goes with it as a misleading error; and, at the same moment, raises a pæan over the greatness of man who, having learnt the lesson of self-help through the light of his own thinking, is about to prepare for himself a glorious destiny on the ruins of superstition. For this superstition, as it is called, has for a millennium and over won the allegiance of the noblest minds, has been immeasurably fruitful of spiritual results, and stirred the soul to its uttermost depths. And this over a large area of human life. If despite all this effectiveness it were still a mere illusion, would not this evoke a deep distrust in man's capacity? Were he capable of going so completely and fearfully astray during so protracted a period of time, and concerning questions which related to the whole conduct of his life and touched his most intimate experiences, it would be marvellous indeed should an unerring faculty for truth spring suddenly up in him to-day. If, on the witness of history, man had really shown himself so weak and defenceless as this in face of the main problems that pressed upon his life, should we not have experienced the heaviest discouragement and dejection? The break with Christianity should thus have shattered man's trust in his own competence, and made room for a dismal and despairing view of human

affairs. And yet not even a prospect such as this could, or indeed should, have prevented this rupture when a necessity of the inner life demanded it. A broad current of the present Age affirms this necessity; but there is also a counter-current to be reckoned with, as we now proceed to show.

2. THE REVIVAL OF RELIGIOUS INTEREST

The revival of religious interest which is taking place to-day is not so much the product of apologetics as the fruit of human experience; and the proof that religion is still indispensable to us is indirect rather than direct. Time has shown that it is not so easy to cast religion out of man's life; that its defeat means loss, a loss which man can support well enough for a time, but not for ever. With the downfall of religion begins that inward disintegration of life which in the long run threatens to rob it of all its meaning, and deeply lower our human nature. The threat inevitably provokes a counter-wave which from modest beginnings swells to a passionate intensity, initiating movements which transform the conditions of human existence, and, in particular, compel a wholly different attitude to the religious problem. Life pulsates afresh in many a new direction, and no one, however professedly modern he may be, who ignores these later developments or minimises their importance, can claim to read aright the signs of the times.

Through its establishment of a direct human

relationship with the Power that supports and governs the universe, Religion gave man the power of reviewing his life as a whole and of passing judgment upon it. And in so far as it made his soul the meeting-place of different planes of reality, and made decision in regard to these imperative, it compelled him to choose between one order of life and another. Moreover, in striving to unite himself with God, man felt the whole cosmos draw down into his soul, and was led to participate in the life of the universe.

With the passing of religion, the connexions which unify the world relapse into mere conjunctions. Within this dust and powder, completely involved in these mere sequences and co-existences, is man. He must accept himself as he accepts his environment, just as it comes. His life consists in attaching himself to, or detaching himself from, this or that point outside him; even his inner life is fettered to a single point; he can in no wise break away from it so as to enter the circle of another's life, or, in last resort, penetrate within the very soul of the universe. Now sooner or later man must inevitably realise the narrowness and pettiness of a life such as this; for by reason of his spiritual nature he cannot be resolved without remainder into his relations with the environment, nor reduced to a mere link in a causal chain. His own thought breaks the chain, rescues him from his captivity, and bids him grasp the world as a whole and adjust himself organically within it. Even his feeling and his striving cannot shrink to a mere point of self-centred affection: these cannot forbear all sympathy with that which

lies beyond their own particular sphere; and, with sympathy, our wishes and desires find inevitably a new centre of attraction. But if man thus participates in a larger life, if he has sight of reality as a whole, then this exclusive concentration on a single isolated point of existence, the circling of the whole sphere of life about this existential atom, is experienced as an intolerable limitation, and the longing somehow to transcend it refuses to be silenced or set aside. But how shall it be satisfied now that religion has been rejected, and with it every inward connexion of reality forfeited, and the world transformed into a mere series of isolated states? Between one such state and another there is now an impassable gulf; and all thought, feeling, and life falls from out the whole of things into the limbo of illusion.

In close connexion with the present problem is the question as to the value of human life and conduct. In the days when man stood in direct relation to the Power that rules the world, and was the object of its providential care; when the decisions that he reached affected the fortunes of the whole universe, helping or hindering its progress; where blessings were at stake which lay far beyond the private well-being of the individual life; then, indeed, life had its indisputable value. Thus, in religion, it was the pure inwardness of religious experience which assumed the primacy over all that happened; there emerged a History of the Soul, which treated all externalities as mere accessories; each of us suffered in himself the mighty tension of the world's destiny and experienced it afresh. No man could then

doubt that his life had a meaning and a value, and the knowledge of this fortified him against all that seemed dark and tragic, and gave him joyous assurance in the midst of strife.

But if this inner world dissolve into mere mist and shadow; if life, confined to a single plane of being, lose all its depth, man becomes a mere negligible unit in the world's vast labour-house: how his inner life prospers, whether he fares well or ill under this new régime, these are matters of no consequence either to Nature or the Social Order. If life has still a certain value, it must spring either from the products of man's labour, or from the pleasurableness of his feeling. But if life were an uninterrupted succession of pleasurable states, this could not satisfy a being whose thought had once passed—nay, been driven—beyond the consciousness of the passing moment, irresistibly driven to look at life as a whole. And if life is more than mere pleasure and joy, if it calls for much labour and trouble, renunciation and self-sacrifice, must not the consciousness that it is all supremely unimportant have a paralysing effect upon our conduct?

In the appeal to the products of man's labour as a standard of value, we see the modern standpoint shifted from the individual to humanity as a whole, and a new centre established from which to appraise the value of life. But either humanity is a mere aggregate, of which the units touch each other only from outside, in which case we are left standing just where we were, or there are laid within our human race the foundations of an inner world, and we are then well over the threshold

of mere experience, for we have recognised in man's life the presence of an invisible Order. If there be no such presence, our human life and conduct has absolutely no value at all.

Religion stands for the conviction that God, and not man, is the measure of things; it represents, therefore, a truth transcending the opinion and caprice of man, a truth which weighs and judges all man's undertakings. If there is no such independence of the truth-standard, there can be no such things as science or philosophy, no upbuilding of a spiritual world, no spiritual culture as opposed to the culture that is merely human, that mere parody of culture; but this independence remains a fiction so long as absorption in material interests reduces the Spiritual Life to a merely phenomenal status, and makes of it a merely human product. For there is then no standard of truth and untruth beyond our own opinions and inclinations, however casual and shifting these may chance to be; with the disappearance of the higher standard vanish all distinctions of value; the opinion of one man, blockhead or good-for-nothing though he may be, is worth just as much or just as little as that of another, though this other may be a genius or a hero: no one has the right to stand out above another. And in practice this means that the power is vested in the masses: matters of truth and right are decided by count of heads on the basis of an impartial and universal suffrage, and in last resort the value of a literary achievement or a work of art is determined by the popular judgment of the metropolis. For with what right and with what power behind him

could any single individual oppose his own conviction to that judgment and claim it as superior? This faith in the masses might appear reasonable so long as men pictured them, after the fashion of Rousseau, as noble and pure, still uncontaminated by the refinements of civilisation, and guided by a sure instinct towards the truth; but that the experiences of later times do not precisely favour this romantic glorification of the people is scarcely open to dispute; thus does the rejection of the higher truth-standard work itself out into its consequences with unmistakable distinctness, and logically extinguish every impulse after truth.

In no particular, perhaps, was the historical influence of the religious movements so conspicuous as in the coherency, the spiritual unity, they gave to life: a unity within which all efforts were organised, directed towards one well-defined end, and socially inter-related. Only so could the Spiritual Life express itself clearly in its own distinctive way. Out of the connexions thus initiated there grew up not only a converging movement among the various departments of human activity, but also community of sentiment and good-will among men. Mutual understanding became possible; men felt with one another and did each other mutual service. It is true that here and there a people may be found more or less capable of cementing its life without the aid of religion; but on the whole such a consolidation of a nation's energies would seem possible only through association with a loftier life which transcends the slavishness and fragmentariness of human existence. Where this inner bond is

lacking, the manifold divergencies of our material interests make themselves dominantly felt, and in default of counter-influences our ways draw more and more apart, we become increasingly estranged from one another, until at last we live in wholly separate worlds. Such inward disintegration of humanity is already painfully apparent to-day; civilisation itself is, in many different directions, in process of rapid dissociation; a Babylonish confusion of speech separating us more and more into rival parties and factions is unmistakably spreading, and threatens increasingly to end in a *bellum omnium contra omnes*. No doubt that in our work, in our handling of material objects, we still co-operate, but such unity as we here achieve is not inward in character, and does not affect our deeper life. As a well-organised business-house stamps its own work clearly with its own seal, so the whole existence of each of us, transformed as it were into work carried on at the universal factory of civilisation, is stamped with the mark of the one little utility which it subserves. Can this satisfy us, and what in the end is the meaning of this great factory of human culture? Whom does it serve, and whom does it profit?

So far we have been concerned with religion only in its general aspect, and we have seen that its demolition is far from proving the unmixed boon which its opponents anticipated. But even in the more specific form of Christianity, it is beginning once more, in the context of this new age, to be better understood. If the answers do not yet carry conviction, it is becoming increasingly

apparent that the questions cannot be set aside. This is particularly true of morality, which in Christianity was most intimately associated with religion. If morality in its traditional form met with manifold opposition, this was no doubt owing in large measure to the rigidity and narrowness, in short, to the inadequacy of its presentation; but that in abandoning the form, the very substance of morality should also have been discarded, that there should have been this failure to reach down to the true inwardness of the matter, and pass judgment from this more ultimate point of view, is due mainly to the shallowness and superficiality which have spread such a blight over our modern world. The essentials of morality may be summed up under three heads. The *content* consists in the detaching of one's life from all aims and interests that are exclusively individual, and in the inclusion of others, ultimately of all others, within the scope of one's personal will and effort. The *form* consists in the demand that adherence to this aim shall be recognised as a supreme duty, and all wilfulness subordinated to its control. The *method*, the one indispensable means to the realisation of morality, is Freedom, the turning of one's nature towards the moral ideal. Taken together, these essentials give a generous breadth to life, a high seriousness, a native spontaneity, and we are left exalted above ourselves. Such changes, however, cannot be wrought without a recasting of all first impressions; and the life which declines such conversion, which remains the slave of its own natural impulses, untrammelled by any thought of duty,

making man a mere part and parcel of nature's mechanism—such a life scarcely deserves to be called spiritual at all: it would, indeed, be emphatically unspiritual were it to adhere rigorously to its own programme.

The more prodigious the movement engendered by our modern civilisation, the more it summons us to strive with all our might and fills us with insatiable ambitions, the fiercer the clash of rival interests and the race for happiness and power, the more necessary does it become that an independent Spiritual Life should dominate the storm and stress of the conflict, test the world's work, and so separate the pure ore of truth from its alloy of human error. Such spiritual independence, however, is attainable only through morality: the collapse of the moral life inevitably brings with it an inward weakening of spiritual fibre, which ensures the lordship of the lower nature. We are dragged down the stream of our own interests and passions, we have lost the power to will, have ceased to be our own master, and are become the slaves of our natural impulses and lusts; and yet such enslavement, more ignoble as it is than any other, is not infrequently characterised, with unconscious irony, as the highest freedom.

If any one will sum up the losses which have already resulted from these lapses, and the dangers which still threaten us from the same quarter, he will not esteem it a reproach to Christianity, but rather as a title to praise, that it should have set morality so unambiguously over all that is merely natural, and regard for the soul's welfare

so far above any and every concern for the things of this world. The struggle for moral existence is not a struggle between interests of equal standing. We have to decide between surface and depth, between a detached and fragmentary experience on the one hand, and on the other a life that is whole and inwardly complete.

Even the more specifically Christian formulation of morality, the precedence given to love and mutual personal intercourse met with manifold opposition, and was attacked from many quarters. But here, again, the critics trusted far too much to external appearances, and drew their conclusions from a few instances of a doubtful kind. If Christian charity had been mere weakness and docility, it is hard to see how Christianity could have conquered a hostile world, and in contrast to experience as we find it have set up a new order of life. And it is hard to see how it could have affected so profoundly all our social relations. All who are acquainted otherwise than through hearsay with the inward development of Christianity know well how far it was from ignoring the problem of Justice, that the question between Love and Justice was most earnestly discussed by it, and that thinkers and artists of the very first rank, such as Augustine and Dante, devoted their best strength to the solution of this problem.

The confusion of this deeper meaning of love with that of the natural, more particularly the sexual passion, also called love, has been a fruitful source of misconception, and notably in this respect that it presents that which is in truth a deep

mystery, and demands for its expression a new reality, as a light and easy matter within the immediate reach of all. Now that life should detach itself from its self-centred individuality, and yet not lapse in so doing into mere nullity and platitude, but display on the contrary a heightened activity and creative power; and that, in thus maturing, it should raise to a higher potency whatever it can grasp and make its own, all this, from the merely individualistic standpoint of the sense-life, is utterly incomprehensible. For it implies a new world, the free re-fashioning of life from its own inmost depths, and this is possible only when the power of the whole comes into play, and, taking possession of the individual soul, creates in it a new life. Augustine, then, was fully justified in maintaining that love within our human sphere is genuine only when it rests in the love of God, and is thereby raised, in the only possible way, above the level of a merely natural impulse. Spinoza, too, distinguished from the merely natural affection a higher kind of love (*amor intellectualis*), in which he found the highest that life could attain to. Again, when we turn to the creative genius of a poet like Goethe, we find the true visionary power of passing into the life of others, whether persons or things, joyously sharing their experience as though it were his own, and then faithfully reproducing what he had felt. What is this, if it is not love? Even a rigorous logician, like Hegel, formulates in his own way the great problem of the mystery of love, the secret of the new life found through losing the old, and these are his words: "Love is the most

stupendous contradiction and beyond the power of the understanding to remove, for there is nothing so impervious as this pin-point of self-consciousness which, in being negated, still retains its positive character. Love is at once the source and the solution of the contradiction."

Christianity—and no other religion in this respect resembles it—has set this great problem, this world-renewing fact, at the very heart of life, and undertaken to make it the controlling power even in the sphere of our finitude. Humanity would suffer immeasurable loss, would sink to the very depths, were she willing to renounce love even for a time. But no one is less likely to do this than the man of to-day. For the complete indifference with which Nature runs her course independently of man's weal or woe stands out glaringly apparent before his very eyes, and the insufficiency—nay, even the illusoriness—of such love as our own natural humanity can bring forth, is just as plain to see. If we cannot recognise and greet Love as a world-power, our life must inevitably lose all confidence and hope. Now we are girt about by a religion which most emphatically proclaims this universal power of Love, and brings it intimately near to each one of us. And are we, at the bidding of superficial reasoners, to allow this splendour to be argued out of our life, cancelled and done away with, instead of hailing it with joy and carrying forward the evangel?

Every religion with a redemptive message takes for granted that man's immediate existence is infected with a contradiction which within the

limits of that existence remains insoluble, and yet cannot possibly be tolerated. In the case of Christianity it is man's moral life which harbours this contradiction. Christianity holds that, down to the very roots of his moral nature, man is estranged from what is right, and therefore requires that he shall become a new creature and live a new life. The form which this conviction has taken in concept and in doctrine is no doubt open to attack on many sides, but so long as the fundamental fact survived as an inspiration in human experience it triumphed over all the objections brought against it. But the modern world, dazzled by the splendour of its own achievements, armed with its consciousness of power, stimulated by its craving for a fuller and a richer life, has thrust such experience into the background, and for a time forgotten it. And now the problems and perplexities of the nineteenth century and our own have thrust it forward once more, and, with growing insistence, are challenging the old complacent belief in the work of civilisation and the light-hearted enthusiasm for progress. It becomes increasingly difficult not to recognise the sharp contradiction which runs through the whole life of man and comes to a head in his moral behaviour. With the development of the Spiritual Life there emerges in man's soul a new stage of Reality, and with it a wholly different set of standards, powers, and problems. That in itself would engender no contradiction were the higher dispensation secure of its mastery over the lower, and were it progressively bringing the whole of reality under its sway. But experience shows

us that this is not the case. Not only does the lower persist unchanged in nature, but it draws the higher down to its own level and enlists its powers in its service; and even from its own point of view the higher appears to depend for its existence on the assistance of the lower, and to be unable to hold together without it. This warp in our social conditions betrays itself with peculiar distinctness through the way in which the whole industry of our spiritual life to-day, whether in politics, in science, or in art, is honeycombed with ignoble interests and aims. We feel the effects of the perversion in the hypocrisies and impurities which it engenders, in the inevitable weakening of personal force, and in the stagnation of all such productive labour as makes demands upon life as a whole. It is impossible to ponder over these perplexities without realising a grave contradiction in the life that we live. A higher type of life, which no human caprice could ever have devised, a world-life in the germ, disturbs our lower moods; but capable as it undoubtedly is of shaking us from our inertia and making us dissatisfied with ourselves and the life we have been living, it has not the power to assert itself triumphantly against all opposition. Thus we remain entangled in our perplexities without the least hope of ever getting clear of them. For there can be no disputing the fact that the idea of progress, with the prospect it holds out to us of a gradual improvement, comes woefully to grief against this fundamental contradiction: as man moves forward the contradiction goes with him, and such advance as he makes, instead of lessen-

ing, serves rather to increase it. But since faint-hearted acquiescence in a situation such as this must mean the loss of the inward life, an imperious impulse towards spiritual self-preservation compels us to ask whether there may not be further depths still open to us, profounder sources of energy whence we may draw fresh ardour of life, and be freed from the limitations of our finitude; whether indeed we may not find, beyond the adulterated springs at which we drink, pure fresh founts of inspiration, whose healing shall spiritually renew us till the life of the spirit become our very own. But any such venture as this must carry us far beyond the realm of immediate experience: it requires of us that we invert the given reality, and so leads us into the paths of Metaphysics and Religion. It would not, however, serve our present purpose to pursue any further the line of thought here suggested; our sole object was to show that the confusions and upheavals we have noticed present the struggle of Christianity for the saving of the soul, the winning of a new life, and the uniting of human and Divine in a very different light from that in which it was set by those earlier generations who saw it through the medium of a self-confident temper, and an enthusiasm for the idea of progress.

Those who ponder all this in their thought, and make clear to themselves what the prevailing modern temper really is, will not deny that important changes in man's inner life are in progress, which convince him in the depths of his soul that that which at the surface of every-day life deems itself so civilised and so perfect is

already found wanting, and is doomed to perish. In the very process through which its powers have been developed, modern civilisation has revealed insurmountable limitations, and has shown its inadequacy for man's need as a whole and its inability to furnish his life with a firm support. For a long time men were fascinated with the profit which this unquestionably powerful movement, impelled by an inner necessity, brought with it in its train ; now we are realising with increasing clearness how much was wasted in the process through which it grew, or else was thrust into the background. These losses were not so noticeable so long as the spiritual atmosphere of the past still persisted, and the novelties of a materialistic and positivistic régime could filter through it and emerge supplemented, softened, and transformed. But now this atmosphere has become increasingly rarefied, so that the supplement that it contributes has become ever weaker and fainter, and the new Order exhibits therefore with increasing distinctness and force the elements of negation and exclusion which are proper to it. Thus its limitations become more and more apparent, and its growth turns more and more into a process of decay. The doubt and confusion thus engendered raise new issues which concern the whole conduct of life, and alter our attitude to the religious problem. If it was possible for a season that Religion should be discharged—dismissed, that is, as of no further consequence—she is now reinstated once again, and reappears with strength renewed.

3. THE PERPLEXITIES OF THE NEW SITUATION

The situation created by the movements we have been describing is of an extremely intricate character, and it is no easy thing to find one's way out of the maze. But there is indisputably a movement in the direction of Religion, however boldly Religion may still be denied by a voluble but half-educated populace. Nor can we fail to detect a certain revival of interest in Christianity, or at least to discern a growing capacity to understand its problems. But this revival is in no sense a simple return to Christianity in its traditional form; on the contrary, every approach that is made towards the Christian belief remains widely sundered from the old orthodoxy. When, after missing their way in their quest after culture, men find themselves cast back upon religion, they return to it from a broader basis, and they need larger horizons than ecclesiastical Christianity can supply. Thus there are many to-day whose strong craving for religion is unmistakably tempered by a deep aversion or else a wearied indifference to its traditional ecclesiastical form. Open to criticism as our modern civilisation still may be, and that in many ways, more especially in its claim to be all-sufficing, none the less it has wrought great changes in our common life, developments in which human error and caprice have played no part; it has awakened new energies in us and put them to use. It has brought us into new relations both with the world and with ourselves. How can we disavow such service as

this, or in a friendly and peace-loving spirit read it all back into the old? Those who hold it possible that Old and New should enter into immediate understanding with one another are wont to insist that it is only the old view of the world that has essentially altered, and that the Christian life, undisturbed by these changes, may still abide calmly by its old profession. But any such sundering of life and world-view is emphatically to be rejected: it cannot be effected without lowering the spiritual status of life, and making it a mere matter of subjective concern. It is no doubt quite possible that changes in our idea of the world should take place without perceptibly modifying the whole tenor of our life; we need only recall here the slowness with which the effects of the Copernican revolution made themselves felt. But so soon as the change affects the whole, so soon as it brings with it a new turn in our way of thinking, it becomes at once a development of life itself, and its consequences are felt through the whole framework and fabric of the soul. We have learnt to know Nature as an Order governed by simple laws, as an unbroken network of causes and effects, and this new appreciation suggests new problems, and renders us capable of new ventures undreamt of by earlier ages; moreover, the new conception of man's historical development as a movement impelled by its own inward forces and unfurthered by any miracle has worked in precisely the same direction. With our new relation to the environment we have become other than we were, and what we do is no longer what we did.

But it is not only in its external relationships that our life is now essentially different from what it was. Its own inner relationships have changed. Our spiritual industry now essays greater detachment from the conditions of the sense-life: it has wrought a wider interval between subject and object, feeling and presentation, and, whilst seeking greater freedom from the special conditions of our human sphere, has developed its own springs of action, moulded its own laws, undertaken a struggle against the narrowness and slavishness of the merely natural life. Now when a movement such as this reaches, as it inevitably must do, the sphere of religion, much of the traditional religious material must seem to mix up sensual and spiritual, and to confuse subjective with objective factors, and in other respects must appear intolerably anthropomorphic. Again, in its ecclesiastical form religion must appear still fettered to a stage in spiritual development which we have once and for all outgrown, and to which we can no more return than we could pass from a later phase of life back into an earlier.

Nor will it prove so easy for religion to resume the position it once held in relation to the whole complex of the Spiritual Life. Time was when it was honoured as the one sole source of what is valuable in life; what lay beyond the pale of religion was set down as a subordinate matter, to which one could be more or less indifferent. In opposition to this tendency the modern age has set the endeavour after a universal life, and has proved the justice of such an endeavour by the splendid work it has done. It now demands that

every single department of man's life, however prominent its pretensions, shall justify these in relation to life's good as a whole, and take its part in the development of the common life.

Now religion cannot be exempted from this general requirement, however justly it may feel itself to be the soul of the whole spiritual Order. And it cannot meet the demand without undergoing considerable internal developments which must affect all its characteristic features, e.g. its conception of God. As a member of the whole it must share the movement of the whole, and cannot therefore portray any particular historical form as the Absolute Truth, and as a Conclusion valid for all time. However much the form may stand for an eternal truth, and in this representation of the eternal feel itself superior to the stream of time, still in its manifestation the eternal appears to us also as a problem, a problem unceasingly renewed. When such convictions are held, the ground upon which ecclesiastical Christianity rests has been manifestly abandoned.

Must we then dissociate ourselves entirely from Christianity, and seek to divert the new and rising tide of religious interest as far from it as possible? This would be necessary only if the traditional ecclesiastical form of Christianity could be simply identified with Christianity itself, and it could be shown that this precise form of Christianity had already exhausted all the essential possibilities, and absorbed all the force of the Christian revelation. But this is by no means certain. In the first place, we must be perfectly clear on this point, that a religion cannot be artificially produced.

Involved as we are in the midst of a complex and cultivated civilisation, the attempt to concoct new religions by sagacious thinking, in complete disregard of all the facts of history, implies an utter misconception of what is essential and effective in religion, and is on this account already foredoomed to certain failure. A religion is not primarily a mere theory concerning things human and Divine—such a theory can, of course, be quite easily put together with a little ingenuity—: it discloses ultimate revelations of the Spiritual Life, further developments of reality, great organisations of living energy, movements, in a word, which have convulsed the age in which they came victoriously to birth, and have subsequently proved themselves strong enough to attract large portions of mankind, weld each of these inwardly together, and set an invisible world before it as the main basis of life. In such upheavals of the life of the people there is opened up a rich mine of fact which becomes the property of all men, and includes valuable experiences of humanity as a whole. He who would cut himself off from this great stream of experience, inward as well as outward, will soon find out how little the isolated individual can do in matters of this kind. It is easy to find fault with what tradition hands down, no less easy to draw up vague views of one's own, but how immense is the distance which separates procedure such as this from the creative effort which urges its sure way forward, from the synthesis which embraces all men's lives and exercises an elemental compulsion upon them. To construct a religion out of concepts cunningly

strung together, what is it but to attempt to make a real material body out of phantoms ?

So surely, then, as the effort to renovate religion should not dissociate itself from the interests and fortunes of humanity, must the preservation of some degree of historical continuity, and the affiliation of one's own work with that of traditional religion appear immensely valuable. But we must first make up our minds whether this concurrence of the present with the aims and ideals of the past is quite so simple and natural as at first it might appear. We must consider whether the movements of our modern life have not cleft an unbridgeable chasm between the newer world and the old. We especially have good reason not to treat this question too lightly, since on our view it is not only the world-outlook which has essentially changed, but the whole conduct of life. What, then, is it that constitutes a permanent bond of connexion so that we can welcome old and new tendencies alike as phases of one persistent historical movement ? There can be only one answer. Our first impressions yield no sense of connexion, we are rather overwhelmed by a sense of difference ; there seems to be an utter disparity between what we have on the one hand and what we want on the other. To feel our kinship with the past we must transcend these first appearances, we must rise to the conviction that the essence of religion does not lie in circumstance and temperament, with all the contingencies that these imply, but in the characteristic spiritual reality to which it gives expression, and this does not spring from any special conditions of human experience, which

do but facilitate its progress and support it in its practical application to human life. Christianity is not a mere product of the first few centuries; these did but prepare the ground for the unfolding of its truth.

Now our whole inquiry stands for the conviction that in Christianity, as a religion of moral redemption, such a revelation of spiritual reality has actually been given, and with it, from the deepest founts of being, an inspiration that stirs us to the pursuit of ends that can never be superseded. This spiritual reality, with the scheme of life which it unfolds, is not itself affected by the vicissitudes of time, and yet our human appropriation of it is a process with a history, and this history can pass through several phases which, as they first meet us, seem to differ widely from one another. But with this spiritual reality as our presupposition, a reality which reveals itself in all the phases of the movement, the deepest intimacies of life may preserve the thread unbroken, and the spiritual content of one phase become the possession of another also, and so none of it be lost. This, then, is our conviction concerning the relation in which we stand to the older Christianity. The same spiritual world, the same groundwork of spiritual life, the same characteristic traits that distinguish all religions of moral redemptions are dominant alike in the old dispensation and the new; and, further, must retain their supremacy if our religious life is not to lose itself in mists of error, and fall most grievously from its high estate. It is not our duty to-day to fight for a new religion; we have but to kindle

into freshness of life the fathomless depths of Christianity. In so far as we succeed in doing this, we can completely satisfy the requirements of the new situation; we can seek to realise a Christianity that shall be at once more universal and more active, and intent on disengaging itself from its anthropomorphisms; at the same time we shall view as our very own the wealth of religious profundity and inward experience which the older Christianity has gathered through its centuries of service, and shall seek to realise them in our own life. Unity and difference can thus assist each other in the winning of their rights.

But this attempt at an understanding rests on a definite assumption with which it either stands or falls; a Spiritual Life superior to our merely natural existence must have its seat of authority in us, resist our acquiescence in the demands of the natural order, and reveal to us the possibilities of a new world. But to this end our first impressions of reality must suffer a spiritual change; our life must turn to the metaphysical, not indeed in the narrow academic sense of the word "metaphysic," but in that sense of it which implies that an Invisible World is accepted as the soul's true home. But from such a venture as this our age shrinks as from a pernicious illusion.

And yet it, too, feels how unsatisfying is the ordinary life of acquiescence and compromise; it, too, desires a deepening of life; but it asks that life shall be deepened without offending the canons of common sense or colliding with public opinion. It would reach a new end by the old means, and is anxious to climb the highest peaks

without forfeiting the comforts of the walk on the plain. Men must first be shaken out of this spiritual laziness, whether through circumstances which at length render intolerable the ineptitude of the philistine's life, or through violent catastrophes of the social order, or through the advent of forceful and magnetic personalities, or perhaps in all three ways at once. When we shape our life with prime reference to the struggle for spiritual self-preservation, and with a view to winning for it both meaning and value, there will be found in us the self-confident and defiant energy of creative passion, and with it a complete indifference to the opinions and prejudices of that conventional life about us which expresses with such pitiful inadequacy the true powers that are latent in human life.

Through transformations such as these, and the attainment of a spiritual life transcending the natural, will it be possible to strive for an understanding between religion and the industry of the civilised world, and to overcome the sharp opposition which subsists between them to-day. For we should never assume that this hostility is normal and in the nature of things, or, above all, accept any depreciating of the world's industry as a mark of religious distinction. Were such opposition normal, life would be split in twain, and the cleavage would infallibly prove most injurious not only to civilisation as a whole, but also to both the contending parties. And yet an understanding is possible only on condition that we are able to distinguish within civilisation itself between the genuine spiritual content that it reveals

and the forms which this revelation takes under the influence of human bias; then, and not till then, will it be possible to consider the question whether religion and culture can meet harmoniously within a life that includes them both, and, without forfeiting their mutual independence, work together from this common basis towards a common goal.

Manifestly our Age is pregnant with great problems, problems which can be successfully solved only when our life is once again stirred powerfully from within. But if this is to be, we must clearly recognise our own insufficiencies and the hopelessness of all attempts to compass the high ends we have in view from the surface-life of our modern culture

4. THE CHURCHES AND THEIR DIVISIONS.

The distinction between the older structure of Christianity and the new one still in the making cannot be given the importance we have attached to it without exciting a strong suspicion that the authority of the existing Churches is not really so final as it might seem to be. The importance of the point demands that we consider it more closely. Not that we have the slightest intention of making a comprehensive survey of the Churches, weighing their methods and estimating the significance of their work; we propose to limit ourselves to asking how the Churches conceive the relation between the old traditional religion and the requirements of modern life, and whether their

ways of handling the problem give promise of a satisfactory solution.

Now, from the standpoint of the Churches, the outstanding feature in the discussion of this problem, as we in Germany understand it, is the opposition between Catholic and Protestant. Let us adopt this division as fundamental for our own treatment also. Catholicism, in the stable and finished form which the Middle Ages gave it, is earnestly engaged in the task of uniting religion firmly with the rest of life; its glance is directed accordingly over the whole field of existence, and it aims at balancing one against the other all life's various interests. Closely connected with this policy is the high esteem in which Philosophy is held by this Church, so that it has its place even in the discussion of religious questions. But however great and imposing the undertaking may be, it cannot silence certain deep misgivings as to the way in which it is carried out. The methods, in all their essentials, remain mediæval in character, and mediævalism, with all that is distinctive of it, can lay no claim to finality. Now the distinctive feature of mediæval policy is just this: the affiliation of the world of natural reason to Christianity through the idea of gradation. Within its own sphere this natural world enjoys a certain independence, but in its totality it is subordinated to the "Kingdom of Grace," and can assert no claim that would clash with the requirements of this kingdom. But it derives its content mainly from the culture of the ancient world, and, more particularly, from the philosophy of Aristotle.

Over against this solution, there arises at first

the question whether such a junction of different worlds, which in their last elements diverge wholly from one another, the world of Antiquity, on the one hand, with its bias towards immanence, and, on the other, the ancient Christianity with its bias towards transcendence, can result in a true inward union; whether, indeed, it is more than a mere juxtaposition of heterogeneous elements which the man of to-day, with that greater force and unity of life which he enjoys, is quite unable to tolerate. From the religious side we are justified in asking whether the superiority which this solution claims for itself does not amount in the end to a pronounced dependence upon ancient modes of thinking, upon the old Intellectualism, for instance, or upon the idea of organisation in the exaggerated form it bore in ancient times; and, on the social side, the claim of finality which it sets up would be quite intolerable unless we could take it as proved that the whole advance of modern civilisation has affected only the outer fringe of life, and has never wrought any central transformation, or furthered life as a whole. The adherents of the old system have indeed bestirred themselves most zealously to prove this; they have adopted a friendly attitude towards the natural sciences, since the results of research in this department do not thrust the necessity for a world-view so forcibly upon us as they do elsewhere; on the other hand, no kind of recognition is vouchsafed to modern philosophy which, with all that is distinctive of it and concerns its essential principles, is set down as a mere outflow of wilful infidelity. He who thinks otherwise concerning

modern civilisation, and rates its significance more highly, he who recognises that, spite of any possible one-sidedness or proneness to mistake its bearings, it is still the source of certain essential developments of spiritual reality, must reject this stereotyping of the mediæval solution as an intolerable restraint; and a Church which would perpetuate a situation so insupportable must be content to fall farther and yet farther behind as humanity marches forward. Moreover, in order to retain the loyalty of its adherents, it must always be pressing more hardly upon them, and, despite all outward expansion, must develop inwardly an ever more exclusive and sectarian spirit.

The movement of Modernism—and it must be confessed that Germany here lags very much behind—declines to settle on this mediæval ground. Its desire is to quicken Catholicism into living activity without sacrificing any of the religious features of the Catholic faith and at the same time to bring this faith into a less prejudiced relation to the spiritual life of the modern world. The movement is decidedly not wanting either in the service of scholarship, wherein its work has been conspicuously good, or in its personnel, for its ranks include some outstanding personalities. But whether it is possible that there should spread from this centre an influence that would affect the whole substance of religion, and whether Catholicism can come to terms with modern culture without forfeiting its very essence, these are questions which we might well hesitate to answer in the affirmative.

In Protestantism we must distinguish two separate types, the older and the newer; the former expressing the convictions of the Reformation time, the latter resulting from the contact of modern culture with Christianity. Common to both, indeed, is the high value set upon personality and the primacy assigned to the inner life; and, in the face of Catholic opposition more especially, this common element is an influential factor; but the specific content of these two types is so very different that they can scarcely be reckoned as belonging to one and the same form of religious faith, inasmuch as orthodox Protestantism has closer affinities with Catholicism than with the newer type of Protestantism.

The old Protestantism, opposed as it was to the mediæval adulteration of Christianity with extraneous elements, was concerned in emphasising the distinguishing peculiarities of the Christian faith. This tendency led it to present the relation between belief and knowledge, or between religion and culture, as one of opposition, and to sanction the sundering of our human life into two halves which touched each other only from without. It held that our faith in Divine matters became firmer in proportion as it was more exclusively self-supporting. No words of ours are needed to show how largely this view, according to which the whole weight of the religious problem bore directly on the individual soul, was responsible for strengthening the religious life, deepening its inwardness and intensifying the meaning of the moral problem; but it would be hard indeed to maintain that its solution of the problem at issue

was in any sense final. The schism implied in this solution leaves both sides of the divided life exposed to the gravest dangers; religion assumes a form that is far too subjective and specifically emotional: it becomes predominantly a matter of individual concern. Culture, on the other hand, when severed from vital contact with the deepest problems which concern man as a whole, degenerates easily into a cult of the merely secular and useful. And the integral status of religion is here less secure than with Catholicism. So long as religion remained, as in ancient days, the unquestioned ruler of life, the movement of culture alongside of it could not in any way prejudice its own development. But the more rich and influential this culture grew, and the more it became man's chief concern, the more did religion threaten to degenerate into mere provincialism, and to rank, in last resort, as a thing of no consequence. Many of its defenders, in their endeavour to secure it against all the doubt and confusion which perplex it to-day, are falling back on a historical basis, and are wont to entrench themselves in the positiveness of historical fact. This venture would be in sympathy with that of the Reformation in this respect at least, that the Reformation itself effected a transition from a speculative to an historical interpretation of religion. But in the eyes of the Reformation, not only was the Scripture story raised above all doubt whatsoever, but it stood in direct correspondence with certain great world-transforming facts, with truths that transcended the historical level. Historical criticism, however, has severely scrutinised the form

in which the Scriptures have come down to us, and has shaken its authority, and we are putting the matter mildly when we say that historical happenings of a metaphysical kind can no longer be accepted as a mere matter of course. We have to determine afresh for ourselves the true meaning of history, and we can do this only from the standpoint of life as a whole. Until this has been done, the appeal to history may easily pass into an oppression of the living present by the dead past, and, despite all its erudition, degenerate into a spiritless historicity which, by failing to distinguish between the intimate and the remote, imperils the full truthfulness of life. The leadership of the Spiritual Life has manifestly passed away from this old Protestant orthodoxy, which is therefore exerting an unjustifiable, we may even say an immoral, pressure upon the community, notably upon the teaching profession, when, with a compulsion that may be directly or indirectly enforced, it imposes upon it a creed which was the product of a special age and a special mental environment. They who no longer have the spiritual leadership committed to them should not be anxious to assume command.

With the newer Protestantism the matter stands very differently. There is here a desire to satisfy the full claims both of religion and of culture, and to seek an understanding between them on the ground of the living present. But if in this way much cause of offence and stumbling is removed, from another side new difficulties make themselves felt. This newer form of Protestantism is the outcome of modern culture rather than of

religion, and however nobly influential that culture may have been—as it was, for instance, at the zenith of Germany's classical period—the distinctive essence of Christianity failed here to find adequate expression. Its faith beyond reason, its renunciation of the world, its vein of austerity, these were thrust far out of sight, whilst its power to overcome the world and renew it survived in a weakened form; and there arose a Christianity that was too amiable and amenable, too full of the world's joy, doing no harm indeed to any one, but so wanting in metaphysical depth that it could no longer stir the soul with might, or gather life's forces together; a Christianity, moreover, that was stronger in denial than in affirmation, stronger to discard the old than to build up the new. Any sweeping judgment concerning this line of religious development is indeed liable to appear unjust, since it is precisely along this line that we find the widest divergencies between individuals, and what each does at his best differs greatly with the person. But no amount of regard for individuals can disguise the fact that this movement as a whole has not yet won over the human race any influence that can be really called great, and that in this respect it still lags far behind the older forms of religion.

The responsibility for this deficiency lies largely with the tendency to adjust the new conviction to the creed and constitution of the old, a tendency which on German soil is notably displayed in the dependence of the Church upon the State. Concerning the advantages or disadvantages of such an arrangement, there is room for differences

of opinion, and it may well be that under normal conditions the policy might have important advantages. But at present the conditions are not normal, and in an age like ours, which has fallen out with the traditional religion, the injury done by compromises of this kind far outweighs the good. For so long as the energy of the movement is absorbed in the attempt to appropriate old forms so far as possible, or at least to adjust itself to them, it will be trammelled in the attempt to express itself sincerely, deprived of its just share in the shaping of its own experience, and prevented from consolidating its efforts firmly and effectively. Besides, the struggle between the old form and the new wastes the best energies of both: the old is perfectly correct when it holds that the new no longer rests on the basis of ecclesiastical tradition; the new is no less correct when it refuses to identify Christianity with this tradition, and seeks to bring religion and culture into friendlier relations with each other. Since any amicable arrangement, any settling of this conflict on the ecclesiastical basis is entirely out of the question, it is difficult to see what further progress towards reconciliation can be made upon this basis, and of what possible use this basis can be either to religion or to mankind as a whole; it is eminently calculated, on the contrary, to bring the religious movement to a standstill.

This applies still more closely to the opposition between Catholicism and Protestantism, though, to be sure, for quite a different reason. This opposition fails to harmonise with the stage which the religious problem has now reached in the

course of its historical development. For certain as it is that the motives which hold these two faiths apart are rooted in a question of principle, and that an abiding problem underlies their divergence, the problem, namely, of the relation between community and personality in religion, still this problem is not the primary problem of the present day. Again, the special form which the problem assumed during the Reformation period can no longer be adopted for our own uses. To put it briefly, we divert the religious movement from its proper channels when we persist in reverting to the opposition which dominated the sixteenth century, and allow ourselves to be distracted from the pressing problems of reform which a radical change in the conditions of our human existence, and a change in the place held by religion in the Spiritual Life impose upon us today. Why should we live a life that is not ours instead of living out our own? Again, it is often a mere cloak for his own nakedness when the Catholic makes such a point of never letting Protestantism forget its schism and infidelity; and the Protestant on his side is for ever reminding Catholicism of its backwardness and superstition. Such policy succeeds only in embittering men's minds, without in any way furthering the cause for which it stands; it may indeed easily obscure the seriousness of the present crisis. He who sets clearly before himself the complete uncertainty we are in concerning the bases of our existence and the main direction which our life is taking, who sees the deep rift which runs through the whole human race, more particularly

the estrangement of religion from the world of culture, and the utter disruption of religion in its traditional form; he who at the same time realises how inadequate are the means so often brought forward as remedies, how frequently men expect to get all the help and healing which they need through the simple acceptance of new-fangled formulas or some narrow sectarian programme, will call to mind the saying of David Hume, that there are men who would stay the torrent of an ocean with a wisp of straw.

In truth the religious problem has now passed far beyond the control of any ecclesiastical or sectarian body; over and outside the existing churches, and through them and beyond, it has become a concern of the whole human race. And as such it demands to be treated, but this is not possible unless it takes on new shapes and follows new lines of its own. But we need not worry ourselves to-day as to how this is all to happen. In questions of such cosmic range as this all impatience is out of place; it is enough for us if we do to-day's duty to-day. Here at least there should be no uncertainty. If we would advance in the direction of truth, we need above all to be clear as to the nature of our task. In particular, it should be clearly understood that when we speak of the age's aspiration after a revived religion, we do not mean by this a simple return to the ancient forms of the Christian faith, nor have we in mind any mitigated orthodoxy, any so-called "liberal" interpretation of these ancient forms. What the age must win for itself is an essentially new form of Christianity answering to

that phase of the Spiritual Life to which the world's historical development has led us. It is a great and a formidable task that here confronts us, and its service demands of us a steadfastness that cannot be shaken, and an energy that will not be bent from its course. But these will be ours to give only as we yield ourselves to the cause, and unreservedly accept its necessities as the guide of our life. Nothing less than this can make us independent of the conventionalities of our day, and arm us for a conflict to be waged not only against declared antagonists, but, with more pressing reason still, against all who hedge with the truth or stultify the issue. For we cannot leave unchallenged the pusillanimous disposition which, though more or less favourably disposed to the cause, shrinks from offending public opinion, and shirks a decisive Yes; nor can we tolerate the temper which ignores gradations and admits no sharp divisions between different minds, but treats fulness and emptiness, depth and shallowness, greatness and smallness, as of similar essence and value, fondly confusing such featureless neutrality with justice or freedom from bias. The more forcibly the growing conflict and confusion makes manifest to every thinking creature that this problem is no mere fascinating drama which we can follow from a point outside the stage, but is a stake over which our life's very meaning is imperilled and our spiritual self-preservation threatened; the more clearly we realise that if Reason does not reside in the whole structure of the universe, it cannot be found in any single spot of it,—the sooner shall we be entitled to hope that

the religious problem will win back the passionate enthusiasm that is its due, and that our work on it will no longer assume the attitude of speculative reflection, but pass into the constructive action of a forward policy.

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